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Max Beloff; Gordon Rattray Taylor; George Edinger; John Cocking; Edmund Penning-Rowsell; Robert Greacen; Stevie Smith

NEW POEMS: by

W. A. B. Gardener; Donald Hall

ON COVER:

Sketch by Sir Edwin Landseer, R.A., Nicolo Paganini (1840)

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LETTERS

BILLY BUDD

SIR,

Having heard *Billy Budd* three times, we much appreciated your fascinating articles on it in the January issue. But we cannot help feeling that there is the same blind spot in each of them, as in most of the published comment on the work. Unwillingness to accept the story seems to have prejudiced appreciation of the music.

Your own Editorial admits that the most important passage in Melville's novel is the interview in the cabin when Vere tells Budd his sentence. But you dismiss the emotion which binds the two men at this point as 'faintly unwholesome', and prefer to see the solution of the tragedy in abstractions, in something you call a 'reconciling agency', rather than in the personal relationship established between two men equally at the mercy of circumstances yet able together to transcend them.

In accordance with Melville's emphasis, the most remarkable passage in the music is the semibreve chords at the end of Act iii which accompany the interview in the cabin. Mr. Stuart's criticism does not mention these at all. Your own article calls the Epilogue ill-conceived; yet the Epilogue repeats to glorious effect the same chord sequences, centring on F major as did the Act iii coda (this is the key of reconciliation in Billy Budd, in contrast to F minor which is used at moments of disaster), and it makes the meaning of the Act iii coda retrospectively clear in Vere's words *I've sighted a sail in the storms, the far-shining sail, and I'm content. I've seen where she's bound for. There's a land where she'll anchor for ever.* The imagery of this passage is very careful. The far-shining sail contrasts with the elusive enemy sail which disappeared into the mists in Act iii, scene i. The land of eternal anchorage contrasts with the sense of being *lost on the endless sea* expressed earlier by Vere and by the flogged novice. The novice is like Billy a type of the innocent sufferer, but he is unreconciled. He cries in Act i 'my home's gone', and his tune—in F minor—droops downhill by a tone at each phrase and so to speak cannot find its way back to the start. This tune is quoted towards the end of Act iii after the death sentence has been passed, and then leads straight into the semibreve chords, whose peculiarity is that (subject to their overriding reference to F major) each one is a tonic or 'home-chord'. Music could hardly make meaning clearer. And the meaning is consistent with the Christian metaphysic about which Melville thought so much. It is when impersonal justice or law, represented in the story by Vere (hence the unbending character of his music which bores Mr. Stuart), is revealed as ultimately personal in nature that the mystery of the universe becomes endurable.

CLARE CAMPBELL
NEIL TYLER
London

THE FEDERATION OF THE DANUBE

SIR,

Colonel Miksche's point of view proves a thorough knowledge of Central European problems, and of the situation that has developed in the very centre of the Continent, especially in the Danube Basin, since the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and corresponds far-reachingly with the opinion prevailing in this country of the disastrous policy followed in Prague first by the late President Thomas G. Masaryk, and still more by his successor, the late Dr. Edvard Beneš. This policy prepared the field for Hitler's fatal attack on Czechoslovakia, and finally opened the door for Communism by the Treaty of Kosice which Beneš concluded with the Bolshevists.

I do not want to let the opportunity pass of telling you how satisfied many people here are by your publication. The English public may be induced to a closer study of the historical facts that have brought about so dangerous a situation as exists at present.

PROFESSOR KURT KNOLL,
Austria

HOBBES AND LORD LINDSAY

SIR,

In his notice of my *Hobbes and his Critics*, Mr. Sisson remarks that Lord Lindsay of Birker 'could write without a shudder that Hobbes's theory of sovereignty "is put into practice in the British Constitution".' While I am glad that Mr. Sisson has emphasised the main theme of my book—the distinction between arbitrary and constitutional power—I must point out that Lord Lindsay has always been highly critical of Hobbes. He belongs, after all, to a school of thought which derives from T. H. Green and Bosanquet, who are particularly anxious to distinguish between the authority of society in general and the power of the executive, as anyone familiar, for example, with Green's criticism of Hobbes and Austin must admit. And in Lord Lindsay's *Modern Democratic State* one finds the following statement in the analytical table of contents. 'Sovereignty is an exclusive or an all or nothing theory and no such theory will fit the modern facts.' The American writer, F. W. Croker, in a standard work on the subject, classes Lord Lindsay with Figgis, Laski and Duguit among the 'Legal Pluralists' who wish to diminish the power of the State and foster 'collective personalities' within it. So far, indeed, has Lord Lindsay gone along this road that he has provoked a good deal of criticism. It seems rather hard, therefore, that he should be classed among those who contemplate Hobbesian sovereignty 'without a shudder'. Lord Lindsay, like other sensible men, has always regarded Hobbes with aversion.

JOHN BOWLE, Oxford

NORTHERN IRELAND

Sir,

Two points in reply to Professor Falls. It is not a question in Ireland of making a bargain over defence; it is a question of reaching a basis from which, Irish history and human beings being what they are, an Irish statesman can begin to operate. Further, Professor Falls seems to look for a sacrifice of sentiment on the part of the overwhelming majority (over eighty per cent). Why not on the part of the minority?

DENIS IRELAND, Belfast

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THE QUEUE

It was a story for children's children
A winter's tale of the death of a King—
When the heard-of died, the unheard stood in their thousands
In the sootblack frostwhite night before spring.

Lights on the bridge, the dazzled dark
River ran between fire and fire
With sensible shoes and ruined faces
They crawled towards their heart's desire.

They were blind in the icy breath,
To the nightlong thought of majesty
Goldringed goldrobed envied apart
But as thou art so he shall be
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade

But the day and the night, and the day and the night
War borne, war torn, care shared, dead in the prime,
Their own dust shaken, their dear heart breaking,
They cared for this, in winter time.

Editorial

I AM printing this month a translation of a long passage from Julien Gracq's famous essay *La Litterature à l'Estomac*. It was published in Paris some time ago, but never so far as I know in this country. The passage I have chosen includes his most important ideas, except for the attack on French literary prizes which he implemented this year by refusing the *Prix Goncourt*. Gracq's novels (for the latest of which the prize was awarded) do not, in my opinion, come up to the brilliance of his work as a critic. They are surrealist, apocalyptic, Poesque, *noir*, symbolic, forest-and-castle haunted, suicidal, determinedly unwholesome and faintly ridiculous. But in this essay, though it rambles a good deal, too, Gracq has been the *only* one to raise an immensely important matter: that is, the impossibility of writing at all—

(i) when the public has at last been defeated by the critics and greets anything with pathetic lack of resistance.

(ii) when the writer is faced with a huge semi-literate public (compared by Gracq to the outer edge of the spectrum) who influence him *without reading him.*

(iii) when the public is so hungry for 'great men' that it will create great writers out of anyone available.

As I have said, I do not think that anyone before Gracq had managed or had the courage to say these things, which are of extreme interest to anyone who cares about writing.

DESMOND FITZGERALD

Notes

THE SAAR CRISIS

The Saar crisis threatens the whole structure of an integrated defence and economy that has been so painfully built up in Western Europe since the War. It is a crisis of confidence and a crisis of means. The Western Powers, and France in particular, still do not trust Germany, and yet, under great pressure from the United States, they have adopted the proposition that the West cannot be defended without her assistance. Now they are driven into a corner. They must either place full trust in Germany, with all the concomitants of equality of rights and representations or they must abandon almost completed plans for drawing Germany into the Western defence community. If they choose the latter course, the Pleven Plan will receive its death blow, and the Schuman Plan would not long survive.

Dr. Adenauer has exhibited a crass lack of tact, and the Germans continue to ignore utterly the debt they owe to the world for having brought about the appalling circumstances under which Europe is at present labouring. On the other hand, French action in the Saar has been distinctly unpalatable. The inhabitants are German—that there is no gainsaying. Political freedoms have been curbed and the economy exploited, surely a poor example. But there must be some way of bringing Lorraine iron ore into free contact with Saar coal without exacerbating obsolete nationalist passions again. Inhibiting Germany has proved fatal in the past. If there is the slightest chance of the Germans proving better friends than enemies, they should be given the benefit of the doubt.

UNO

The proceedings of the Assembly of the United Nations have long been an esoteric mystery to the ordinary observer. The session which has just ended in Paris seemed to produce only an intensification of the Soviet bloc's campaign of vituperation and intransigence, a division of the remaining representation into three camps, and no notable progress in any single sphere of international collaboration.

The American plan to restore some measure of authority by circumventing the veto-ridden Security Council and making collective security a matter for the decision of the Assembly raised more problems than it solved. Under British prompting, the Western European nations discouraged the attempt to isolate the Soviet bloc and managed to leave the field free for limited agreements should Russia show any sign of a conciliatory mood. Then a third bloc of Arabs, Asiatics and some South Americans emerged as a neutralist group, if only with a common resentment at the diversion of most American aid to the partners in Western defence. The real danger now is whether the United States will get tired of both paying the piper and carrying all the responsibility for countering Communist aggression.

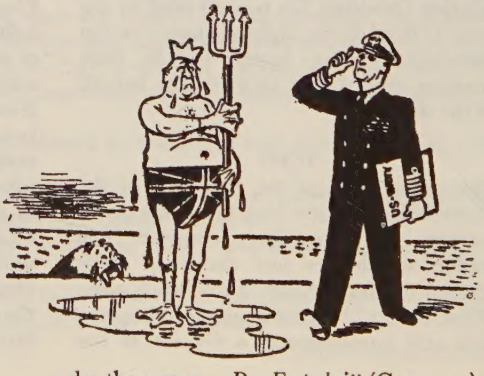
THE ARAB WORLD

The independence of Libya continues to stand out like the one good deed in the naughty world of Arab nationalism. Along the Mediterranean littoral from Beirut to Casablanca, nothing but strife, strident demands and stringent repressive measures greet the worried eye. In Egypt there is a lull—for how long no one can tell—and now the hopelessness of containing national aspirations by administrative measures alone is being visited on the French in Tunis and Algeria. Not only is the emergence of Pakistan as the premier, or at least the largest, independent Moslem state providing a fillip to anti-colonialism elsewhere, but the new British Dominion is becoming increasingly disquieted at the conditions of so many co-religionists. So many factors are involved. Considerations of Western defence find the British determinedly rooted in the Suez Canal area until such time as alternative international arrangements assume the burden, while the American air forces are now implanted further west.

Cartoon

Am I disturbing you? *Elseviets Weekblad* (Holland)

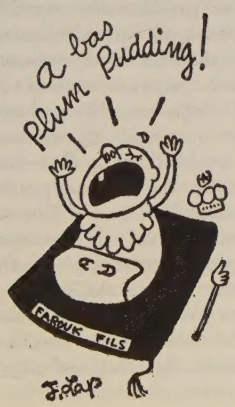
Politiken (Denmark)



. . . . rules the waves *Der Fortschritt* (Germany)

'I think we'd better stop; the blood donor is exhausted' *Stuttgarter Zeitung*

'Just a few conditions . . .'
Die Zeit (Germany)



'It is more blessed to receive'
Nebelspalter (Switzerland)

History has resumed its normal course and the world faces a first-class monetary revolution, quite unprepared

THE MONETARY REVOLUTION

PETER WILES

Fellow of New College, Oxford; University Reader in Economics

There shall be in England seven half-penny loaves for a penny; the three-hooped pot shall have ten hoops; and I shall make it a felony to drink small beer. All the realm shall be in common and in Cheapside shall my palfrey go to grass. . . . There shall be no money; all shall eat and drink on my score; and I will apparel them all in one livery, that they may agree like brothers, and worship me their lord.

(Jack Cade, Henry VI, Pt. II.

Since the days of Jack Cade there has been striking progress among politicians in the knowledge of economics, and especially among the Left-wing politicians, of which he was an early example. But in one respect there has not been great progress, whether among politicians of the Left or Right. I refer to Jack Cade's assumption that you can have your cake and eat it. Today the three-hooped British economy must provide the ten hoops of rearmament, high wages, exports, investment, social services, etc., and it is a felony to build small houses, even though we are manifestly many years away from the possibility of enough large ones. This attempt to get out more than you put in is a very simple and universal human trait. Human optimism, human benevolence towards others, human selfishness, and the human tendency to live only in the present all conspire to make politicians and others overdrive the economy. In particular, the three great modern pursuits of war, welfare and protectionism have enhanced this perennial tendency.

SOME OTHER TAXPAYER

But, translated into terms of money, this overdriving of the economy means inflation, or too much money chasing too few goods at current prices. Since the money will not be still, and the goods will not increase, it is the prices that must give: rising prices are the inevitable result of inflation. The principal cause of inflation is, in Keynes's words, the impecuniosity of governments: their attempt to claim more resources than they can pay for by taxes. But it follows that behind the government lies the taxpayer, who could, if he wished, lay down his income—his own claim on resources—for the Chancellor's sake in sufficient quantity to avoid inflation. In fact, however, he invariably suggests that some other taxpayer make the sacrifice, or that the Chancellor spend less. And with the words 'some other taxpayer' we arrive at the next greatest permanent cause of inflation: disagreements about the distribution of the national income. Most will agree in the abstract that the government should spend on this and that, but very few will volunteer actually to foot the bill. Thus the burden is shifted from class to class, and inflation is the monetary aspect of class war.

THE SOURCE OF OUR TROUBLES

Most misleadingly, there were recently one hundred years (1819–1913) in which the secular tendency to inflation was brought to a halt, except among minor states. Even since 1913 the world has found it possible to produce one terrible slump. All our reflexes, all our accounting habits, economic theories and national plans have assumed the recurrence of unemployment and deflation. Now, however, history has resumed its normal course, and the world faces a first-class monetary revolution, quite unprepared. Our situation is much like that of Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the celebrated 'price revolution' of the economic historians, due to the influx of silver from the New World. The latter-day Potosi, which is the source of our troubles, is of course the banks. Banking and paper

currency—a monetary system managed not by the niggardliness of nature but by the fallibility of human beings—are essentially inflationary. We have progressed—from the chance discoveries of mining prospectors and the puny debasements of kings to the printing press and the ledger. Why prices were stable during the nineteenth century, when for practical purposes these new monetary techniques began, is a great mystery that should have worried economic historians more than it has. The absence of inflation for any long period is an *oddity*, a not wholly natural occurrence. In the nineteenth century it was due, no doubt, to our ancestors' unusual success at keeping the peace, their unnatural hostility to tariffs and their equally extraordinary neglect of the poor (not indeed that the poor suffered on the whole from this neglect, but few positive measures were taken to help them). To these moral and political restraints may be added the restriction involved in tying the currency to gold: in this way nature, too, was brought in to still the printing press.

CREEPERS AND GALLOPERS

The inflation of our modern managed currency has of course had forerunners in earlier managed currencies: the French Revolutionary assignats, the franc since the Revolution, the currencies of Latin American states from their foundation, the currencies of certain North American colonies in the eighteenth century, the German mark twice, the Hungarian pengo once, the rouble twice, etc., etc. These inflations may be divided into creepers and gallopers. Creepers have been due either to the irresponsibility of uncontrolled banks or to persistent but small failures on the part of Government to pay its way, and gallopers are due to governments alone—whether in a war or during its aftermath. The gallopers are always resented by the whole population, and they always end in the production of a new currency, a radical currency reform. The creepers, on the other hand, are usually due to the pressure of some powerful and interested class within the state, and not wholly unpopular. In particular, experience shows that creeping inflation is very good for full employment, and therefore increases the national product. Creeping inflation brings prosperity of a kind, and this perhaps is all that the world has learnt from the teaching of the late Lord Keynes. But the creeping inflations of the past have usually been brought to an end, too, because they were confined to one state, or even to the area served by one bank: ultimately convenience or the law dictated that the national currency, or the notes of the irresponsible bank, should be kept to a steady par with other currencies.

It is fair to say that nearly all these inflations (and this includes even the American ones) have been due to war, or chiefly to war. Perhaps the only case of a serious peace-time inflation is that of the rouble in 1929–39. Price statistics were suppressed in 1929 but it appears that there was a severe creeping inflation due to over-investment and to an attempted export drive: both investments and exports create incomes without creating goods to satisfy those incomes. Now the Soviet economy was the first to be planned in the modern sense and the first to achieve full employment; hence it is most significant that from the beginning of planning and full employment (with the first five year plan) it was subject to creeping inflation. Economic planners, like other politicians, always try to get out more than they put in. It is also worth noticing that much of the investment that took place was influenced by strategic considerations, in that it was located in costly and out-of-the-way places, and that much of it was specifically undertaken to produce munitions. It seems difficult to speak of a *peace-time* inflation.

WORLD-WIDE INFLATION

Be that as it may, our present predicament is different in that it is world-wide. Nearly every country in the world is subject to a creeping inflation: we may except Belgium, Switzerland and Portugal. The result of this is that there is no external standard to judge any currency by, no pull of expediency in international trade to restrain particular governments. With local inflation, as we saw, whether due to the irresponsibility of uncontrolled banks in a small area, or due to the impecuniosity of a state, there always comes a point when

other banks' notes or other nations' notes appreciate so much as to cause grave inconvenience, or even a flight from the depreciated currency. But into what shall we fly today, especially with exchange control to keep us at home? A world-wide creeping inflation has no self-correcting mechanism. The almighty dollar, which loses value at a mere five per cent per annum, is now our standard, and it is by it that we condemn the pound, which depreciates at twice that rate. *Parmi les aveugles, le borgne est roi.*

THE RESPONSE FROM THE LEFT

The doctrine that inflation has been considerable, and is likely to be continuous, meets with different response from Left and Right. The Left denies the extent of inflation, refuses to admit that it matters anyway, and attributes the rise in prices to anything rather than state action. The U.S. stockpiling programme is a hot favourite just now; and of course there always is *some* extraneous factor which must share the blame. But there can be no doubt that the state is chiefly responsible. By its rearmament and its investment plans, it over-taxes the economy. By protection it keeps out cheap foreign goods. By the redistribution of income from rich to poor it cuts down the supply of savings. And in order to manage its own immense debt, it keeps interest low, so that every man borrows at his will and no man is illiquid. To this root cause the Left proposes no cure, as it is unwilling to contemplate the disease; it proposes merely the old suppression of symptoms by controls. At most it will admit we must avoid further devaluation in respect of other currencies: that is, the £ may depreciate, provided it does not depreciate faster than the $. No duty to keep the £ actually stable is admitted. We are not, it seems, bound to redouble our efforts and swim against the tide: in a world-wide inflation we may float upon it. It is not too much to say that among some Left-wing economists 'deflation' refers to any state in which prices rise less than 2 per cent per annum. In all this the Left unconsciously betrays its greater burden of guilt.

But it is very easy to exaggerate the harm done by a continuous creeping inflation. For no other way has yet been found than this of abolishing unemployment—of keeping it not below the three per cent maximum which Lord Beveridge once promised us in a mood of intoxicated optimism, but down to the feverish one and a half per cent of postwar reality. And over-full employment is a very good thing. It is not true, for instance, that output would increase faster if unemployment were, say, three per cent as some sophisticated people urge. No doubt it would be more convenient for factory managers, as stocks would be bigger, the worst workers could be sacked and labour discipline among the rest improved. But the plain fact remains there would be fewer people at work. Output would not fall as fast as employment, but it would fall. Then over-full employment is the best social security for a worker. He is happier and—as Miss Honor Croome has put it—*freer* than at any other time; for the foreman has no power and he can change his job at the drop of a hat. Than this he knows and desires no greater freedom. Above all, inflation—a modern inflation with controls and heavy taxes—is *not* bad for wages. For it is not true that profits gain from inflation: since heavy profit taxes have to be paid as if the replacement cost of fixed assets had not arisen, profits suffer very greatly, and there is no question of capitalists claiming a larger slice of the cake. Moreover, all price controls, subsidies and social services are specifically designed to help the wage earner. There is no class of person better insulated against rising prices in a welfare state. Just as Professor Tawney's Elizabethan gentry climbed to power on Spanish silver, so the modern proletariat floats upward on cheap money.

THE RESPONSE FROM THE RIGHT

What have the Right to set against this? Inflation causes artificial scarcity, and scarcity requires detailed state planning: rationing, quotas, licensing, etc. Nearly all state intervention, other than merely monetary measures, is due to inflation or war—so far as they can be distinguished. (In a deflation the state merely sits back and encourages private enterprise to form what monopolies it will.) Inflation, then, centralises power and curtails freedom (except for the worker). It

saddles us with huge civil service overheads. It generates balance of payments crises and their attendant dislocations (which seldom touch the worker); and through these crises it weakens the independence and the influence of the state abroad. It expropriates the economically weak (a category that does not include workers). It makes charity, foresight and saving impossible (but workers are too poor to exercise these in any case).

This is an unconvincing list, that can only worry the thoughtful: and even the thoughtful may prefer the solid advantages of inflation. The hope, then, of the Right is not to stabilise prices—no one will thank them for that, but to slow to a 'creep' the 'gallopers' unleashed by its opponents. Perhaps, too, it may impress the electorate by the diplomatic successes open to any country that inflates slower than the rest, for such a country can lend abroad instead of borrowing, and its influence thrives on others' crises. Even so much restraint would not be easy, for the Right, too, can be guilty of inflation—we may instance the promise of 300,000 houses.

FALLACIES LEFT AND RIGHT

Whoever wins, however, we may add to the rash prophecy of an Age of Inflation a rash prophecy about its politics. The Welfare State is accepted by most people on the Right and will hardly excite much controversy in the long run. Nationalisation is an obsolete issue which the Left is wisely abandoning. Instead, inflation itself will be the most important home issue. 'Welfare' radicalism has won, and 'property' radicalism has lost. The future clash—foreign policy apart—will be between monetary radicalism and monetary conservatism. What slogans, then, will assault our ears, and between what opposed fallacies is truth to be crushed in future? We may hazard a few guesses (Right-wing fallacies in italics):

'Pounds, shillings and pence are meaningless symbols.'

'*So long as money is sound, the economy is sound.*'

'We must have cheap money to soak the rich and stimulate investment.'

'*The Bank Rate is a delicate and powerful instrument whereby we may control the economy.*'

'If you control everything else—prices, exports, imports—you don't have to control money.'

'*If you control money you can dispense with all other controls.*'

'There is no connection between home incomes—e.g. the Health Service—and the foreign trade deficit.'

'*The foreign trade deficit is solely due to inflation at home.*'

'The only way to cure the deficit is by import restrictions, export drives, and if necessary, devaluation.'

'*The only cure for it is deflation.*'

'We must use our bargaining power on the foreigner (block his sterling balances, fix the sterling rate higher than he likes, etc).

'*We must follow international fluctuations where they lead us.*'

'Always finance everything that can physically be produced.'

'*Finance only so much output as the balance of payments allows.*'

'Full employment is the first responsibility of government.'

* * *

Most of these arguments have been heard before: to the historian of the early nineteenth century they have a very familiar ring. They have all been pitched high, so as to show up the contrasts. It may fairly be said that the Left has much more whole-heartedly embraced the fallacies proper to it than the Right. As we have already suggested, a rational and moderate attitude to money is more difficult to attain on the Left. Indeed, to the two last fallacies there would appear to be no right-wing counterparts. As to the victims of inflation, it is less clear who will compensate them. Presumably each party will have its preferences: one keeping up the value of Old Age Pensions and family allowances, the other paying more attention to civil service pensions and house rents. But compensated they must all ultimately be, and about this much controversy will rage. Granted this compensation, and granted that galloping inflation is avoided—and these are not simple provisos—the world has surely worse things to worry about than the prospect of continuous inflation.

Coal production has got to rise by twenty million tons

THIS YEAR, NEXT YEAR

HELEN GOSSE

Press Officer to the National Coal Board until 1949. Now writing a History of the Coalmining Industry

People have to realise that winning coal is a public service, like the high road and the Post Office. . . . Some day it will be clear to everyone that, if the State paid all the costs of exploiting coal, the stimulation of every sort of production would be so great as to yield a profit to the whole community and the miners would become a public force like the coastguards or firemen

—From *Meanwhile* by H. G. Wells, 1926

When H. G. Wells wrote these words, the miner was still the tattered Cinderella of industrial society. Today not only has he risen to be the aristocrat of the Labour Exchange, but is the highest paid of all industrial workers. With the introduction of special pensions, he takes his place beside the fireman and postman as member of a public force; and for five years, during a period of trade expansion, the State has been 'paying all the costs of exploiting coal.' Yet we are desperately short of miners—perilously short of coal.

The fuel shortage has been used as propaganda by both the main political parties, and the Conservatives find themselves presented, at a cruelly inopportune moment, with the chance to implement the proposals of their spokesmen, Sir Charles Reid and Colonel Lancaster, for the reorganisation and decentralisation of the industry—if the National Union of Mineworkers consents. Does the N.C.B. deserve the criticisms that have been levelled at it?

In some respects progress has been remarkably good. For instance, coal is still relatively cheap—too cheap according to many economic experts. Its average inland price has risen only twenty-nine per cent from Vesting Day to last autumn, whereas, over the same period the wholesale prices of all other commodities skyrocketed by eighty-seven per cent. This 'cheapness' of coal is in accordance with the principles laid down by the Nationalisation Act. But whether it will remain tenable is doubtful, for a rise in the price of fuel to industrial concerns is thought to be the most effective short-term measure of enforcing fuel economy. In support of this policy, it is argued that between the two world wars —when coal prices increased sharply— British production rose by seventy-five per cent and yet coal consumption remained absolutely static.

AN UNEQUAL RACE

The nation's coal problem has now become an unequal race between demand and production. For inland consumption has risen from 175 million tons per annum in the 1930's to 208 million last year, although domestic consumption has been drastically curtailed, and is now thirty per cent lower than pre-war. It is the needs of full employment that have been largely responsible for the increase. The continual 'gap' between production and demand has tended to obscure the magnificent and disciplined way in which the miners have responded to the heavy demands that have been made of them. For example, output was 36 million tons higher last year than in 1945, although the number of men in the pits was approximately the same as on Vesting Day; o.m.s. has risen by twenty-one per cent, the latest figure of 1·21 tons having broken all previous records. The extent of the achievement is more clearly shown by output-per-man year. In 1946, for every man employed, 260 tons of coal was won; by 1951 this figure had risen to 303 tons, the best (except in 1937) for more than fifty years. Over the same period faceworkers increased their annual yield from 647 to 737 tons.

The miners gave further proof of their patriotism when, a year ago, they abandoned the five-day week, a cherished right, amply justified by the rigours and dangers

of their calling, and one for which they had fought pertinaciously for many years. The output from Saturday working last year was 12 million tons—every 600 tons of coal equal approximately £40,000 worth of finished manufactured goods. Thus, since the war the collier has played a vital rôle by supplying 'invisible' coal for Britain's export drive; unfortunately many foreign markets are now so desperately in need of coal as fuel that we are being forced into direct barter. The United States, seeing Western rearmament plans endangered for lack of coal, are expected to offer Marshall Aid to the British and German coal industries, in the hope that, by so doing, they may stimulate us to export 20 million tons of coal in the immediate future. But any hint of American 'interference' in the running of British coal-mines would be vigorously opposed by the National Union of Mineworkers.

THE WILD OAT HARVEST

Although an important contributory factor, the exigencies of rearmament must not be blamed for the wild oat harvest of today's coal crisis, the seeds of which were sown at varying times by many different hands; for no one with even a superficial knowledge of the British mining industry is satisfied with the progress it has made so far. In order to assess at their correct value the Conservative Party's suggestions for decentralising and reorganising the N.C.B., it is as well to glance back at the *Reid Report* of 1945,[1] which formed the blueprint for nationalisation of the coal mines —for, after all, Sir Charles Reid is the part author of both publications, and the unquestioned leader of the Tory 'opposition' to the powers at Hobart House.

Re-reading it today, it is evident that its authors were 'caught napping' on two serious issues. First, although the report recognises the shortage of mining engineers and skilled technicians, and makes sensible proposals for education and training of new entrants, it completely ignores the possibility of a manpower shortage in the pits; secondly, the startling rise in post-war fuel consumption far exceeded all anticipations. It is alarming to discover how one false assumption in the Report can be held responsible for so many of our subsequent troubles. For example, great stress was laid upon the urgent need to close down 'uneconomic' pits in order to concentrate production among fewer, larger, and more heavily-mechanised mines. Obedient to this suggestion, the Board has, up to the present time, closed down no fewer than 450 pits. Retribution was swift and deadly; for a scheme that had worked successfully in European coalfields, at a time when unemployment was widespread and mining labour easily got, was a resounding failure in Great Britain during full employment. Pits losing as little as 35s. per ton were closed down—usually in the teeth of opposition from the N.U.M. Then, more than half the men from the obsolete pits, instead of presenting themselves for work at the mines scheduled for development, as they had been expected to do, disappeared from the industry for ever. And the N.C.B. found itself forced to buy American coal at £7 per ton.

It was then discovered that the traditional sources of recruitment to the mines had been drying up; many families, embittered by their hardships during the inter-war years, had left the mining villages. Those who remained had fewer children, and fathers, still pitmen themselves, though they appreciated the vastly improved conditions resulting from nationalisation, were nevertheless unwilling that their sons should enter the pits.

THE DRIFT FROM THE MINES

On Vesting Day the mining labour force was 697,000; by 1948 an intensive recruitment drive had raised the numbers to 724,000. Then, as pits were closed down and the workers' control order lifted, the miners vanished with disastrous rapidity, and by 1950 the numbers had fallen back to the danger level of 1946. During last year the tide turned and now there are 702,000 at work. But the industry requires 15,000 new entrants at once—30,000 eventually—if the National Plan for coal is to succeed. The Board is optimistic that recent improvements in pay, and pensions, will stop the drift from the mines. But the N.U.M. declares that pensions are not enough, pointing out that fear of poverty due to sickness or disablement from an accident are common causes for

[1] Report of the Technical Advisory Council Command 6610. H.M. Stationary Office

men to leave the pits, particularly married men. Approximately 1,000 men die prematurely every year *because they are coal-miners*. Four hundred and eighty-five lives were lost in pit accidents in 1951; and each year pneumokoniosis and other miners' diseases claim at least as many, perhaps more, victims. About 2,000 men are seriously injured annually, and roughly 200,000 are away from work for more than three days as a result of injuries received in the pits. The Union demands that death, injury, and sickness benefits shall be raised until they are equal in value to the minimum wage-rate of the mining industry. Other inducements to raise production and improve attendance 'this year, next year' may include income tax concessions in recognition for overtime and six-day working—should other Trade Unions permit!

MEN AND MACHINERY

With a perpetual labour shortage, it is vitally important that every man should be employed as usefully as possible. It is therefore discouraging to discover that, although vast quantities of expensive machinery have been poured into the pits, and two thousand miles of new conveyor belts installed, the ratio between men employed at the coalface and others has remained almost stationary—in 1946 it was 40·2 per cent; it is today just 41 per cent. The scarcity of good planning staff and the reluctance many colliery managers display towards availing themselves of technical advice each contribute to this apparent failure.

In the profitable coalfields of the East Midlands Division, however, much use has been made of new machinery and up-to-date techniques; as a result, production has risen since Vesting Day by thirty-one per cent. The reason for this success is not entirely due to inspired leadership. Favourable geological conditions prevail and American techniques of extraction, in which coal is treated as crude ore to be torn from the earth and processed on the surface, have proved highly successful. So much dirt and stone gets mixed with the coal by these methods, however, that in some East Midland Areas only sixty per cent of the mineral raised is saleable coal.

In the United States, where the majority of seams lie thick, level, and close to the earth's surface, and where, therefore, shaft sinking and winding costs are relatively trivial, this concept of coal as ore is logical enough. In this country most coal is extracted from thin seams which often present awkward gradients and lie at depths varying from 1,000 to over 3,000 feet. In conditions such as these, American devices can be costly—and even, owing to the amount of dust they raise, dangerous. But after various false starts, British mining engineers are beginning to evolve first-rate machines suited to our own peculiar mining needs. At first too much reliance and hope were placed upon American and German techniques, but it has now been realised that brute force, when applied to our 'temperamental' English seams, is frequently wasteful. We need 'careful' machines which treat mining once again as an art. Such a machine is the new Samson Stripper, which not only eliminates the use of explosives, but wedges out the coal in large lumps almost silently and without creating dangerous clouds of dust.

INTELLECTUAL BANKRUPTCY

The conservative attitude of Management—its hostility and fear of new methods—has been an anomaly of nationalisation; surely one of the great potential advantages of public ownership of the mines should be the ease with which risks can be spread, and new ideas tried out in pilot areas and collieries. As it is, the N.C.B. has shown itself unwilling to experiment and slow to pass contracts. One of the first tasks that confronted Sir Hubert Houldsworth last year on arrival at Hobart House was the need to accelerate capital expenditure. The report of the Productivity Team that visited the U.S.A. to study trans-Atlantic mining methods criticises this dangerous weakness of the Board. '*Above all*,' it states, '*the British coal industry should inspire colliery management to initiate experiments and innovations*.' This is a repetition of the warnings in the seven-year-old *Reid Report*—warnings based upon the knowledge that the mining industry of this country was bankrupt, not only of physical, but also of intellectual assets.

Today, the N.C.B. is as starved of senior officials as it is of miners. The Board is the largest industrial enterprise in the world, employing, directly and indirectly, three quarters of a million people, and yet it is doubtful whether 2,000 members of its administrative and technical staff earn as much as £1,000 a year. It appears that of these, approximately 700 are attached to Hobart House, London, and to the divisional headquarters; leaving a meagre supply of 500 senior officials dispersed thinly over the 48 areas. In British economy as a whole the proportion earning £1,000 and over is estimated to be 5 per cent and in the United States 22 per cent. In contrast, *less than half of 1 per cent* is surely inadequate for the mining industry.

This dearth of senior officials—men able to arrive at important decisions and with the authority to see that they are carried out—combined with frequent changes of Minister—there have been five different Ministers of Fuel and Power since Vesting Day—is probably one explanation of the slow progress in capital projects.

The disquieting rise in coal consumed by electrical undertakings—they are using 9 million tons more a year now than in 1946—clearly demonstrates the different speeds at which big developments have been carried out in the two industries. Out of every £1 of national income, 4s. is devoted to gross investment, of which 3d. is spent in electricity and only ¾d. devoted to coal. Until recent months, liaison between the two great corporations was notoriously weak, but now there are signs that the eagerly-awaited colliery-power stations—long delayed at the blue-print stage—are at last to be built. In the four years 1946–50 the N.C.B. spent an approximate total of only £30 million on projects costing £100,000 or more. If 635 million pounds—the sum which the Plan for Coal demands—is to be spent by 1965, a drastic speeding-up will be necessary in the planning departments, for at least £40 millions a year will have to be devoted to modernising the industry.

DECENTRALISATION

The Conservative Party wishes to abolish N.C.B. Divisions and to give the areas greater freedom. On a strictly technical basis this is a sound policy, for it would aim to cut the engineers free from cocoons of red tape and encourage them to concentrate solely upon production problems. The Plan fails, however, on the human side, because it does not recognise that, if the energy of the miners is to be tapped to its fullest possible extent, nationalisation must spell partnership and democracy—from the coal face to the board-room.

Neither the miner nor his union leaders will tolerate any form of decentralisation which they imagine might, however remotely, endanger national solidarity, set coalfield against coalfield, and lessen the power of the Union. It has been a long and weary fight to achieve national wage agreements, and the men are profoundly suspicious of any plan which they fear might entail a return to local negotiation of major issues. Their refusal to accept Italian labour is striking proof that they still regard full employment and high wages as precarious and possibly evanescent phenomena. Although miners grumble loudly that their Union is, like the Coal Board, cumbersome and slow since it too became 'nationalised', they realise that it is far stronger than ever before; and are naturally jealous of any infringement of its—and their—newly established prestige.

THE 'MYSTERY'

If Britain is to avoid insolvency, coal production has got to rise by twenty million tons. This can only be done if everyone in the industry is imbued with a sense of urgency, and if the speed of reform is vastly accelerated. By all means enlist the aid of brilliant 'outsiders'. By all means raise the numbers, pay and qualifications of under-officials until they acquire the status enjoyed by section foremen in American pits. By all means reassess the rôle of management; install the finest modern machinery into safe and well-ventilated pits. By all means, in fact, give the industry the thorough spring-cleaning for which it has been waiting so long. But it must never be forgotten that the miner himself is the inner core, the Mystery, of the coal problem; unless his full co-operation is won and kept, the Board will be as impotent as a stranded whale . . .

For several years literature has been the victim of formidable intimidation by the non-literary

UNFAIR TO LITERATURE

JULIEN GRACQ

A note on M. Gracq appears in the Editorial

ONLY a very minute proportion of those who discuss literature today have any real knowledge of what they are talking about. It is impossible to understand this curious fact without taking into account the extraordinary transformation in the general method of apprehending and behaving during the last decades. During, let us say, the last fifty years, the sum of human knowledge in almost all fields has, as we know, developed beyond all possibility of expression. It is no longer possible, nor has it been for some time, for anyone with a normal human brain to keep abreast of, or to formulate any clear conceptions about, a subject, except through popularisations reaching him not at second, but even at third or fourth hand. And as the individual grip on the acquired knowledge of the species grew progressively weaker, men became more and more painfully aware of the constant pressure of a totality. It was as if each individual had become the needle of a seismograph: nowadays the whole planet is bombarding him every minute with a series of disturbing and usually indecipherable transmissions. In so far as he refuses to take definitive refuge in a little individual paradise of nonchalance, his attention is pulled in a thousand different directions by matters of technics, politics, science and economics, which are all of undeniable topicality; none of them can any longer be treated as inoffensive; he is confusedly aware that now there is no branch of human knowledge, even the most traditionally anodine, such as history, genetics or statistics, which is not endowed with tooth and claw, and tooth and claw for *him*. There is no longer any question of keeping them at arm's length; but the amount of time and attention he can devote to each is shockingly reduced; the time, say, he can give to reading a feature article in the evening paper and the attention he can devote to a talk on the wireless. The result is that, speaking numerically, there is today no longer any first-hand public for anything, since the few specialists who are in touch with the latest developments in their sciences are a third or fourth-hand public in everything else. Acquired habits struggled for a while, as usual, against the unthinkable conditions being imposed on the mind. Pride in making a personal examination survived rather longer than the possibility of exercising it.

The Hiroshima business did more than make a clean sweep of one town amongst a hundred others; it destroyed the last of these knight-errants of the *common measure*; it did more than open the way to a materialist world tyranny; it led to an era of willing servitude of the spirit. Something has given, something that was neither a wall of wood nor a rampart of paper. As the last defences cracked, the public suddenly capitulated at perceiving the unbridgeable, astral distances between the scope of human vision and the *how* of a phenomenon. They seem suddenly to have abdicated from their last prerogatives of supervision and verification. They have handed in their checks, resigned thenceforward to living in the grey fabulous world of the domestic animal, humbly receiving what is set down for them without asking for explanations. Individual reactions have become more and more timid, and tinged with a flavour of derision and culpability. Even where, as in literature, personal taste had no reason to allow its right of immediate decision to be diminished, one might argue that a certain contamination has occurred. If the average reader is asked to give an opinion without any specific frame of reference, one realises, from his extremely cautious and wary reactions, how he is cruelly at a loss without the guarantee of the experts to whom he is accustomed to refer in everything. He feels that he is walking through a minefield, that the elements of the business are no longer in his hands. Few things

have been more significant in this respect than the extraordinarily passive, even frightened behaviour of the majority of the critics during the discussions on a literary forgery which is now notorious. Whereas a few burnt their boats by declaring themselves at first sight of the text, there were many who succumbed to a sort of stupefaction, which in itself causes one to think, and to a feeling of admiration for those who had actually not been afraid. For a brief moment one could sense the yawning gulf of docile indifference and non-resistance over which modern literature is hovering. It was obvious that the majority were waiting to see what the papers made of it. They were following the established trend; they had instinctively *given it up* as if it were a thorny problem in nuclear physics. It must be said, because it is all too true: a large, a very large, proportion of the educated public today keeps abreast of day-to-day developments in literature in the same way as they keep abreast of developments in atomic science: they are both things which evade our immediate apprehension—we obtain our information through the newspapers. We have created a public which will register with the same patriotic gratification and prudent lack of curiosity that *Zoë*[1] is now functioning and that a new *avant-garde* poet has arrived.

If the years after 1945 seem to mark a crucial phase in our literary history, it is not so much on account of the value of the works produced as of the development of a new relationship between writer and public. For the first time a literary school has been able to win the freedom of the city, to get established and recognised by the great majority of the public without having to submit to a preliminary scrutiny to see if its works were readable and its theories comprehensible. It is, of course, true that twenty-five years earlier a considerable portion of the public took no greater pleasure in studying the works of the surrealists, nor was any more deeply interested in its theories. But all the same, they did not toe the line. Honour at least was saved and the public retained the courage of its incomprehensions.

In the same twenty-five years we have passed from the period in which revolutions were due to the passions of the masses to that in which they are admittedly organised above the heads of the crowd by members of inaccessible governing circles. There is the mystical, mythological fear of being left behind on the dust-heaps of history, of not being 'of one's age', which is something like missing the last Underground. (Lautréamont has described the modern intellectual's nightmare: it is that of a child *running behind a bus.*) Yet it is not so much that the number of lip-converts to existentialism has been multiplied, as that there has been a shocking exploitation of the vast inferiority complex which the public has now conceived towards everything that it admits, after certain documentary evidence, to be above its head. Thus the existentialists have profited in two ways. In the first place, they have benefited from a sense of tardy remorse on the part of the public, which in an access of zeal has vowed never again to let its misunderstood geniuses die in a garret (and if in doubt, they plump for admiration). Secondly, and more importantly, they have benefited from the enhanced prestige accorded in advance to all specialists of the obscurer sciences.

* * *

The truth is that for several years literature has been the victim of formidable intimidation on the part of the non-literary, and the most aggressively non-literary, at that.

We have quite literally reached the point where Caliban is writing. Metaphysics, also, have made a landing in literature, with a thud of heavy boots which is always impressive at the beginning. We watch their troops march by, these strange occupying forces, these great foreign devils, and ponder on the incomprehensible sources of their strength which are, in fact, only the temporary inanity of the forces opposed to them. A friend of mine, who is concerned with the editorship of a literary review, once confided in me his alarm at the rising tide of monstrous articles of Jasperian, Husserlian, Kierkegaardian origin which were threatening to overwhelm him. They were like a tribe of famished nomads, who had previously been kept at a distance, but were now slipping through the breaches in the wall, with the intention of establishing themselves

[1] *Zoë* is the French atomic pile.—Ed.

as conquerors in the domain of the general public, which was infinitely more productive than their own territories. And there they were, with their arms and baggage, their own customs, their own amusements, and their own language, quite ununderstandable to the natives. It is true that saturation point was quickly reached, and the doors closed again, but there was already quite a colony of little people with curious habits, who seemed to be able to pass, by a privy stair, from the public conveniences to *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, recalling Sainte-Beuve's remark: *We should cut a passage direct from the stable into the library, and when Francisque Michel has finished in the one, shove him quickly into the other, but not, please, into the drawing room.*

Nowadays we find people lowering their voices as in church at the mention of books. One comes to wonder whether we have not reverted to an age when the sacred writings are the more respected in that the very richness of the obscene symbolism is taken to be proof of an esoteric meaning which might otherwise have been lost for ever. There is a certain provocative scatology which could not, with impunity, be deleted from the modern metaphysical novel. For the public it is the very indication of mystery; it is a fetish, a paralysing voodoo like Père Ubu's broomstick. To the rich collection of collective deliriums provided by our age can be added the comical behaviour of the literary public towards the awkwardness of such short commons; it is known as the *danse devant le buffet.*

* * *

This intimidated public, lacking all sense of direction and feeling both incompetent and unwilling to exercise its own faculty of judgment, has at least one defence, although, as we have seen, circumstances combine to create in them an ever increasing state of passive receptivity. However indecisive the habit may appear to be, since all decisions are taken elsewhere, they are at least not entirely unaccustomed to reading. But now, to their further discomfiture, they are assaulted by the still less authentic reactions of another public, which is however impressive by the sheer weight of numbers—the public that does not read at all.

We are entitled to presume, for proof is difficult, that some decades back those who did not read had no influence on the reputation of a writer, even if it were only for the reason that since they did not read him, they had no other means of being aware of his existence. It is possible that certain great names, assisted by the distribution of cheap copies, penetrated into the depths of the provinces: Balzac possibly, but more probably the 'reds' who were passed from hand to hand like election literature, such as Courier, Eugène Sue, Victor Hugo (and we know, in his case, how grossly this was over-estimated by Lamartine in 1848). But on the whole their circulation was not extensive. If anyone talked about literature, by and large he knew what he was talking about. He had read. A writer's reputation might bear only the slighest relation to the average opinion of his readers, but it did not in any case depend in the least on his non-readers. Judgments on contemporary literature, as they took shape from day to day, did at least offer a minimum of guarantees, at any rate in so far as they had a positive content. There were unknown writers, and misunderstood geniuses, but on the whole the names that the nineteenth century has transmitted to us as truly great have remained so for us today. We have inherited hardly any usurped glories, few glaring mistakes. Few . . . perhaps one, dear to the compilers of literary guides, a classic case of posthumous bankruptcy in literature: Béranger. It is odd that, as far as I know, no one has ever tried to elucidate this case of collective aberration which sheds such a curious light on the way the critical faculty of an educated public can falter the moment it is influenced by a heavy flux of opinion coming from a deeper and obscurer level. Béranger the songwriter was treated as an equal by Chateaubriand and endorsed by Sainte-Beauve. The very nature of his gift makes him the prototype of the writer who is not read, that is to say, he is someone who can be imposed on others by a plebiscite of people who do not read, by virtue of the fact that he is sung in the street. When his verses did reach the ears of connoisseurs, they were transmitted by the vast sounding-board of the Paris streets, and were transfigured by a kind of

confused and reverberating glory from which they could no longer be detached. It may be supposed that even the most sensitive contemporary ear no longer really heard them. The Béranger case is an example of the complete annihilation of enlightened taste in minds which have succumbed to a state of traumatic dissociation, a 'crowd state' which has permeated and infected them through and through, in spite of themselves.

* * *

The line of demarcation between those who read and those who do not is far from being precise. Around the reading public today there is a vast fringe, a sort of crepuscular halo, of the vaguely enlightened, those whom the light reaches as it were dispersed and broken up as by a prism. The literature they have neither the time nor the curiosity to study nevertheless projects on to them some fragmentary rays, diffused, unrecognisable, having to penetrate heavy layers of resistance to reach them. The means of communication known as printing has nowadays been reduced to an almost mechanical art. If the transmission is too weak, it can be relayed by an abundance of technical devices, which both simplify and amplify the sound, so that something of the author's voice reaches the extreme limits of the crowd, but rather like the vague belchings of the loudspeakers which splutter like a background accompaniment above the hurly-burly of the circus. It would be interesting, if one had the time and the leisure, to try to define the zones of the infra-literary spectrum: red for the public which frequents sales, cautions, congresses, private views, exhibitions, *rencontres*, autograph signings, and other literary displays; yellow for the readers of condensations and digests; green for the magazines and Sunday papers; for literature hotted up and garnished and served in comic strips, cinema blue, and finally violet for the wireless, that last trumpet full of strange stridencies and sudden silences, enveloping both worlds and angels where the last faint murmur of literature peters out on the shores of the infinite.

* * *

What sort of a message can be transmitted by a writer to someone who does not listen to him or read him, who knows nothing of him except the syllables of his name, sounding like a monotonous hornblast through a thick blanket of fog? Yet the syllables are sounded on two or three familiar notes, which he recognises instinctively, which make him prick up his ears like the clanging of the fire-engines through a crowded street. It is a vehicle that travels far and fast, a name which has immediate priority, but is it a person? If so, he has suffered a strange mutation. One might say that the more distant and shadowy the shores to which his name travels, the more he loses of whatever made up his weight and substance and the more he acquires that glossy, empty lightness which makes a buoy float and keeps a name above water, at a price, the price of a miraculous simplification, of getting rid in time of whatever complexity in his work might prove too cumbersome. When one plunges into the depths of the public, into those zones which become obscurer as one goes deeper, there is a threshold beyond which a radical differentiation occurs, like that which takes place at certain levels of the ocean bed, between the fauna which have become invisible and the fish which have become phosphorescent. There are still a few names circulating in the abysmal deep, which seem to secrete their own light, within which they disappear whilst attracting a growing intensity of attention which can no longer be satisfied elsewhere in this world of darkness. There is no clear indication of the means they adopt to survive in this oxygenless world: the names which circulate amongst the mass of the public are not necessarily supported by the weight or importance of a work, and almost never by a work which is mentally accessible to the public. Their connection with a real public of any importance is often extremely remote. They seem to provoke an unforeseeable, unregulated fixation in the crowd, which is then systematically plugged by the techniques of journalism and the wireless, until it becomes firm and exclusive. This fixation seems to require a mystery and a zone of unknowledge around its object. The modern writer, apart

from the position assigned to him by his equals or by enlightened criticism, exists, (or does not exist) not in virtue of the public that reads him but infinitely more decisively through the non-reading public for whom he functions as 'a star'.

It is not a question of lofty moralising nor of being sarcastic at the expense of the sometimes organised accident which gives birth to a 'star'. Nor do I underrate the undoubted efficacy of modern publicity, often only supplying an existing demand with which, in the majority of cases, the writer himself has nothing to do. What is at stake is the growing pressure of the non-reading public which imposes willy-nilly an obliquity of vision on the informed reading public. For this is an age when the cultural barriers have been lowered, and circles which were hitherto impregnable have become more and more susceptible to infiltration from beneath, just as the caprices of the great Paris *couturiers* who determine fashion are far more influenced than one would believe by the 'feeling of the time', that occult, street-corner conspiracy in which everyone is party. This new phenomenon is not due to the writer or to his behaviour. In so far as stars are concerned, the demand, even if at first unconscious, preceded the supply. The star supplies a need. If European crowds have followed the American and started clamouring for and creating stars, it is because they are in some way necessary to a Europe in agony; they are in some way connected with the salvation of its soul. To the crowd they are someone *walking on the water*. They provide victory by proxy over that terrible feeling of submersion which overwhelms modern man clutched in the anonymous maw of the vast overcrowded city. When you see all eyes clinging to the screen as if to a life-buoy, you realise that even this imaginary contact gives immunity against death, triumphs for a moment over the sense of protest against life uttered by human molecules in hopeless revolt against the irredeemable business of being part of matter. What is difficult is to discover at what point a previously unexpected fixation begins to be more or less knowingly solicited, for it is only too clear that the supply did not for long remain behind demand. The accidental and the impromptu was quickly ritualised, as in the cinema, and the returns from the ceremony were not always overlooked.

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Today the writer seems subjected to a pressure which is very dangerous to his equilibrium. Given an initial degree of success, he is sucked into a current which will try to shape him to the dimensions of a 'great man'. In 1949, the description 'great writer' is, in so far as the mass of the public is concerned, not so much a decoration for services rendered (usually accorded posthumously) as a response to the general need to provide quickly for any gaps in the array of public figure-heads. This is particularly evident in some closed circles, such as the orthodox Press of the extreme Left, where, for one reason or another, mutations and departures take place rather frequently. Since the writer has nowadays at his disposal a thousand ways of making himself known which are often infinitely more effective than his own writings, his position can obviously be established much more rapidly if he tries methods other than the slow conquest of a reading public and the slow digestion of his work by those who are far from hungry for good literature. Our civilisation is in love with graphics and moving pictures. A thousand emotional impressions impinge on the eye, rather than on the intelligence of judgment, creating an order of obsessive preferences which are different from those of literature. It has let loose an automatism of repetition: heavy type in the papers, repeated use of photographs, the headlines of reviews, the presidiums of literary congresses, like school prize-givings, the publication of sales, the signing of manifestos, the organ-blasts of the wireless, and the autograph sessions, where the writer's talent is obscurely manifested by the extent of his performance, like a chess-master's by playing simultaneous games. The general public is nowadays unconsciously led to insist on this bizarre transformation of the qualitative into the quantitative, as a proof of ability, so that the modern writer owes it to himself to present a surface, sometimes even before he can show any talent.

CLASS WAR BY DEPORTATION

JUDITH LISTOWEL

Lady Listowel, a Hungarian by birth, describes from first-hand information the latest move in Communist policy

BETWEEN 21 May and 21 July 1951, fifty thousand men, women and children in Hungary were deported. Most of them were educated people and people trained for some profession. Why should any Government be as foolish as to use for heavy physical labour, people who could render good service in their own walks of life and whom it cannot replace?

Here we come up against one of the worst phenomena of the methodically-organised class war. Despite their materialism, the Communists liquidate entire classes, regardless of the effect on the nation, because some of their members object to the Communist brand of totalitarianism.

The Soviet Government has applied this wasteful method for years. Vladimir Petrov, who has spent seven years as a forced labourer in the Kolyma goldfields, describes in his recently published book, *It Happens in Russia*, how thousands of writers, scientists, surgeons, engineers, teachers and artists, die from overwork, malnutrition and sheer brutality. Meanwhile, inexperienced but loyal Communists are appointed to their jobs, until they—in their turn—are purged for mistakes invariably described as 'sabotage'.

No wonder that under the Communist system production is inefficient and expensive. The easiest way to economise is to cut costs by employing prisoners as forced labourers. If they die, more persons can be arrested; there is no danger that the supply will run out.

As soon as the Communists secured absolute power in the East European countries, they introduced this sytem. In Soviet Russia it developed gradually between 1917 and the early 30's. To East Europe, Moscow's henchmen brought it ready-made. In 1941, from the Baltic States they deported 157,000 persons; in 1945 and since then about 715,000; between September 1939 and June 1941 from Poland 2,000,000, of whom about 800,000 have not been accounted for; in 1945 from Sub-Carpathian Ukraine 80,000 Hungarian nationals, of whom not one has returned; in the spring and summer of the same year from Hungary 295,000 persons, of whom 119,000 died in Soviet forced labour camps; from Rumania the entire Saxon population; since the Liberation from all the East European countries individuals deemed 'dangerous' have been continually deported.

In 1947, also following the 'Soviet example', the deportation of 'class alien elements' began in Bulgaria. By the end of 1948, about 900,000 persons had been expelled from their homes; 100,000 were used as forced labourers, the rest banished to remote villages to die from undernourishment and disease. In Rumania, on 4 March, 1949, all former landowners were expelled from their homes; within a month, mass expulsions began from Bucharest and from provincial towns; thousands of 'class alien elements' were sent to do forced labour on the Danube–Black Sea Canal, in rice fields or on State farms; in the spring of 1951, from the frontier zone some 15,000 Serbs were deported to the Baragan desert. In February–March 1951, 'class aliens' were banished beyond a thirty-mile radius from Polish towns and from a hundred-mile-deep zone of the coastal area. The Communists seem to have decided to deport about ten per cent of the East European population.

Then came the turn of the Hungarians. The background to the mass deportations of these fifty thousand unfortunates is worth telling in detail. In April 1949, a scientist of high repute escaped from Hungary. A few weeks before his departure, he visited a friend in one of the Budapest Ministries, who showed him a roneoed copy of the top secret, new Labour Decree and begged him to

smuggle it out of the country so as to warn the world of an impending crime. The scientist did not dare to slip it into his pocket as callers to the Ministry were liable to be searched on leaving. But he memorised its contents.

THE LABOUR DECREE OF 1949

The secret Labour Decree laid down that first 200,000 men and 200,000 women, later 300,000 men and 300,000 women, together *1,000,000 persons* 'about whom it can be believed that they will become enemies of the State' should be 'enrolled for work', if need be to be performed 'abroad'.

This Labour Decree was not put into effect in the summer of 1949 because, after the scandal caused by Cardinal Mindszenty's imprisonment, the Hungarian Communist Party did not dare to face another world outcry—especially as it was sure that the Catholic Church would protest violently against the deportations. The Catholic Church had first to be terrorised into silence.

Until 1948, the man who was to succeed Cardinal Mindszenty as Head of the Bench of Bishops, Archbishop Joseph Grösz of Kalocsa, was regarded by the Communists as 'reasonable'. But when the regime began to attack the Church, Monsignor Grösz vigorously rejected its false statements; when the campaign against Cardinal Mindszenty gained momentum, he suggested that the Bench of Bishops should show absolute solidarity with him; when the monasteries were dissolved and negotiations with the State took place in 1950, he took up the same attitude as Mindszenty would have adopted.

Now look at a few dates. On 15 May—six days before the mass deportations began—the Hungarian Communist Government set up a *State Office for Religious Affairs* on the pattern of the Soviet *Council for Religious Cults*. On 20 May—twenty-four hours before the mass deportations began—Archbishop Grösz was arrested and the other bishops placed under house arrest. Only then did the Hungarian Communists feel safe to strike.

In the early morning hours of 21 May 1951, one thousand commandeered lorries set out with plain clothes Security Policemen carrying lists of names and addresses.

That morning—21 May 1951—one thousand families were deported from Budapest. After that, for three months, every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, deportation orders were served, and every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday trains packed with deportees left Budapest. Some groups were driven to Ferencváros station, there locked into cattle-trucks, which were left standing on a siding for thirty-six hours. Despite the heat, they were not even given a drink of water. A similar procedure was followed in the provincial towns of the west of Hungary.

There never were 50,000 aristocrats in Hungary, not even if bankers, generals, landowners, former ranking civil servants, officers and police officials were added to them. Working-class people, artisans and peasants have also been deported, even some young people in employment. One young man, on receiving his expulsion order, rushed to his nationalised office and begged for a note stating that he was employed and could not be removed. His chief gave him a letter; he left triumphant. On reaching home, he found that he had been given a note of dismissal 'with immediate effect'.

Pregnant women, babes-in-arms, old and sick persons—all had to go. One old man, a former aristocrat, had advanced cancer and only a few days to live. He was taken although he ran a temperature of 104 degrees. Many persons committed suicide rather than be deported. The Budapest morgue was fuller last June and July than in the days of the Jewish deportations by the Nazis. Several deportees have died on the way.

What has become of the things the deportees had to leave behind? In many cases, they were taken over by the 'deserving Communist' who was allocated the flat. As this shocked the population, special shops called *artex* were set up, to which deportees have to sell their valuables at a price fixed in dollars, for which they are paid its equivalent in forints—at the rate of one forint for one dollar. The official rate is eleven forints for one dollar, the black market rate

150 forints for one dollar. Even from this puny sum, ten per cent is deducted in tax.

THE OTHER END

What has happened to the deportees at the other end? The first trainloadfuls were sent to two concentration camps in the Szolnok district. The strongest among them were sorted out and soon after 'disappeared at night'. They have been taken to the Soviet Union, where they are used as forced labourers in mines. The rest were sent to work as forced labourers in Hungarian mines or on construction sites.

After the two concentration camps had filled up, the next arrivals were billeted on 'kulaks'—so called rich peasants—and on the intelligentsia, who had to feed them. One village doctor had twenty-nine persons billeted on him.

Let three letters received last summer from Hungarian deportees tell of their conditions. *Letter No. 1:* 'With my wife and two children, we have been ordered to live in a stable, which we share with a cow, a horse, poultry, two dogs and a regiment of fleas. We lack everything, even bread. . . . The peasant family would have been prepared to take us into its cottage, but the authorities have forbidden this.' *Letter No. 2:* 'When the deportations began, I sold our flat to a man employed in the Ministry of . . . retaining only essential furniture. I took mother (she was eighty last winter) to a village in County Fehér. . . . A fortnight later the Security Police came to fetch us, saying that we had 'fled' without authority. They transported us to this ghastly place. We have one tiny room, the family is none too clean. Mother sleeps on a very hard divan, I on the floor. The sanitary conditions are unspeakable.' *Letter No. 3:* 'Mother became paralysed last year. . . . She had to be lifted into the lorry when they deported us. Everyone in the house cried, even the "democratic policemen" had to look the other way. . . . The peasants are kind to the children, but the chairman of the local People's Council has forbidden me to do any shopping until the last of the villagers has been served. I am not allowed to show my face in daylight. . . . My hair has gone grey in these last three weeks. . . . What will become of the children?

THE PEOPLE'S PEACE HARVEST

About a fortnight after the arrival of the first batch of deportees, 'agricultural brigade leaders' appeared in the villages, called them together and told them that they had to help in gathering 'the people's peace harvest'. They ordered them to be ready next morning at 4 a.m. No transport was provided; even persons in their sixties had to walk several miles a day to and from their place of work. Their breakfast consisted of a mug of some hot brew and a chunk of bread; at noon they got a one-course meal and another chunk of bread; at six p.m. a second one-course meal and bread; after darkness had fallen, they had to walk back to their quarters. This meant a sixteen-hour day. The work itself was heavy agricultural labour, such as carrying dung, lifting turnips, hoeing, soaking and beating hemp or flax (the latter means standing in water to the waist), and so on. Their wages—from which the cost of their food and the 'rent' was deducted—amounted to about three shillings a day. During the harvest period, especially if the 'agricultural brigade leader' was an ambitious man, the deportees were roughly handled. For instance, a man personally known to me, whose left hand is crippled, was ordered to hoe a certain area by nightfall. Experienced agricultural labourers had to work with all their might to hoe an area of this size. This deportee could not do it—the 'brigade leader' beat him up so harshly that for days he could not retain his food.

Almost without exception, the agricultural *norm*—the minimum amount of work they had to do to receive their basic wage—was more than the deportees—many of them elderly—could accomplish. It would take a special study to describe the methods, ranging from blows and kicks to the docking of food, used to speed up their labour. A woman in her fifties, also personally known to me, was deported in a pair of light summer shoes, unsuited even for a country walk. Within a few days of being ordered to work on a State farm, her feet were a mass of sores. She could not fulfil her *norm*. She was punished by having her bicycle confiscated for a week, so that she should have to walk over three miles in the morning to her

work and three miles in the evening back from it. She got to the point where she could not get up. She declared to the brigade leader that even if he flogged her, she could not move. He did not flog her—but docked her food. 'If you can't work, you can't eat.'

Another special burden of the Hungarian deportees is that they are forbidden to leave the village in which they are billeted without written permission from the local People's Council. The child of one family, known to me, fell ill. The doctor was summoned and prescribed a medicine. This was only obtainable at a chemist in a neighbouring village. No deportee was allowed to fetch it. A week later, the child was dead.

THE WINTER

With the coming of winter, agricultural labour ceased, and this unsatisfactory source of income dried up. Even the most optimistic deportees suddenly realised that, unless they received outside help, they would either starve or freeze to death. Heart-rending letters have reached their friends in and outside Hungary begging for old clothes, food, blankets—anything, ANYTHING which could be bartered for food and fuel. Men who have never asked a favour in their lives appealed to friends in many lands who at first could not understand what it was they wanted. The implications of the class war by deportation are still not understood in the West.

When it became obvious that the Hungarian Communist Government banked on thousands of deportees dying this winter from cold and hunger, the peasants and workers began to voice their indignation. The village doctors, risking the wrath of the Communist authorities, wrote report upon report to well-known medical men protesting against the treatment of the deportees. The Communist local authorities also wrote to Budapest, warning that there might be epidemics among the D.P.'s, which would endanger the health of the population. In the first week of November, the regime deemed it necessary to announce that during the winter the deportees would be sent to work in factories, on State farms or on building projects. Nothing was said about the way in which men and women in their sixties and seventies, sick persons and children, were to maintain themselves.

SO-CALLED HUMAN RIGHTS

Protests in the West against the deportations in Hungary have infuriated the Communists. On 18 August, 1951, the Minister of Popular Culture and Enlightenment, Joseph Révai, said: 'We acted correctly when we acted against former members of the ruling class. Even if these actions violated their so-called human rights which seem to entitle them to conspiracy and treason, we promise that we will continue to limit them in this right. . . . *Human rights, as we interpret them, are the rights of the working class and of loyal intellectuals. These are the human rights which are being protected by our Constitution. As for slave labour, if it is true that our Socialist construction is based on it, our accusers should try it themselves.*' (My italics.)

In his rage, Révai revealed the truth that (1) human rights are limited to special categories of the population, (2) these rights are in themselves limited, and (3) forced labour is extensively used. He did not add that the mass deportations of May–July 1951 meant the first 'instalment' in carrying out the secret Labour Decree of 1949; that on 12 May the Ministry of Agriculture had issued a decree authorising only State farms to obtain 'harvest help' .'Harvest help' turned out to be the deportees, without whose forced labour the State farms could not have fulfilled their production targets. But there was not enough to benefit the collective farms; no doubt further deportations will 'improve' this situation in 1952. Nor did Révai mention that many former landowners, estate managers and bailiffs, now used as forced labourers, could manage the State farms in a manner that they would not depend on slave labour. The Communist aim is not to make agriculture efficient but to wage the class war. In a Marxist society the class war means that you must liquidate—kill off—those who do not, or might not, agree with you.

'Preserve full employment and give the fullest possible publicity to the sufferings of others'

BREAD AND CIRCUSES

GEOFFREY GORER

THE Roman Emperors, we are often reminded, used to keep the Roman mobs contented and docile by seeing that they had a plentiful supply of 'Bread and Circuses'. For me—and I wonder for how many other people?—this phrase has always called up a rather vivid if somewhat improbable picture: the Colosseum, no more a ruin, with its endless tiers of seats crowded with men and women dressed in nice clean tunics and togas, each clutching a large cottage loaf, as they watch entranced a school of *haute école* horses, or chimpanzees dressed in human clothes, the antics of the clowns or the skill of the acrobats, forgetting their just grievances in their pleasure at the triumphs of grace, skill and perseverance in the arena.

This picture is completely false and, as I shall try to show, dangerously false. The only connections between the circus of the Romans and the circus of today are verbal and architectural; we follow the Romans in dubbing 'circus' a circular space surrounded by buildings or constructions (for example, Piccadilly Circus), and also the organised activities which take place in a similar architectural setting, a circular arena surrounded by tiers of seats. Owing to the curious development of taste and the economics of public entertainment, today this arena is reserved for the most innocent and most skilled performances. A few may be squeamish concerning the methods alleged to be used in training the larger mammals, or more frightened than impressed by the nonchalant grace with which the acrobats and stunt-men risk their lives twice daily; but even allowing these reservations, no spectacle is more free from offence.

As we all really know quite well, the performances which took place in the Roman arenas were of a very different nature. Skill may occasionally have played some part; impressive and expensive spectacle frequently did; but the most consistent feature of these mass entertainments was the agonized and bloody death of many men and women, butchered to make a Roman holiday. The victims were sometimes professionals, who gained precarious ease and fame while they could overcome their rival gladiators; more often they were 'enemies of the state' who belonged to some outlawed group or party, for example, the Christian congregation. The circuses gained their popularity from the ingenious variations in the way humiliation, torture and death were presented for the pleasure of the mass public.

THE ROMAN FORMULA

One of the components of the formula which the Roman emperors used for controlling the masses, with, on the whole, very considerable success, was the constant provision of spectacles which could gratify the crowd's sadistic wishes; the other component 'bread' may perhaps be translated as 'full employment'. The Roman formula might be expanded: 'Preserve full employment and give the fullest possible publicity to the sufferings of others, producing these sufferings if necessary, and you will turn aside popular discontent from yourselves and avoid revolution.' If this expansion is correct, 'bread and circuses' has more than historical significance; it can tell us something about the world today.

Since the later days of the Roman Empire, the official employment of agony or humiliation for State purposes has been relatively limited, at least until very recent years. Probably all human beings have the *potentiality* of getting pleasure—a 'thrill'—out of watching another's pain. This potentiality would seem to vary in ways we do not yet understand with different human temperaments and constitutions. In some people it will be so weak that it will lie

completely unsuspected under most circumstances; in some people it will be so strong that it will seek for gratification, either in reality or in fantasy, whatever the legal sanctions against such behaviour; the majority will probably accept such pleasures if they are accompanied with the approval of official morality, and will reject them if they lack this.

Until the first third of the nineteenth century, most Western European governments, including that of Great Britain, provided sadistic scenes for those whose temperaments demanded them—public humiliation (the stocks or pillory), public torture (floggings at the cart's tail, for example) and public executions. These spectacles were justified in the great name of Justice. Although they were public, they were not compulsory; if you enjoyed such things, you could go and watch; if you did not, you could stay away and probably never know the details. It is doubtful if the public exhibition of such punishments was deliberate government policy; rather there was no feeling that there was anything wrong in taking your pleasures from such scenes, if your taste lay that way.

As the nineteenth century progressed, public opinion became more and more censorious of the pleasure gained from witnessing 'circuses'. Prisoners were still humiliated, tortured and killed, but this took place out of sight, as far as the public was concerned, either within the confines of the prison walls or in such distant arenas as Siberia or French Guiana. Victorian prudery was exercised perhaps even more effectively on the sadistic than on the erotic components of public life. Nineteenth-century governments gained approval to the extent that the disciplinary measures which they still all employed were hidden. A chain-gang on the side of the road affronted everybody's sense of decency; what went on inside, for example, a military prison was only the business of specialists or particularly sensitive humanitarians.

Although it is a little aside from our main theme, it is worth noting that Nazi Germany maintained the Victorian prudery concerning the public witnessing of cruel acts. Nothing in recorded history parallels the horrors of the concentration and extermination camps; but they were very carefully hushed up. Active sadists found most congenial employment; rumours were whispered around; but the Nazis did not provide the German public with sadistic 'circuses' to any extent.

There seems to be quite a lot of evidence to suggest that the Roman formula for keeping populations quiet and apathetic is coming back into favour. All governments of whatever colour are pledged to the 'bread' of full employment; within the last two decades, and particularly since 1945, the presence of 'circuses' can also be discerned.

COMMUNIST TRIALS

The most marked of all the 'circuses', because so near the Roman model, are the mass 'trials' and executions reported from Communist China. So far, we miss the arena; but otherwise all the components seem to be there—compulsory attendance, mass participation in the condemnations, and the death agonies made as visible as possible—with the technical improvement of the broadcasting, photographing and reporting of the proceedings to give a taste of and for them to crowds infinitely larger than could get into the Circus Maximus. Except under direct Western pressure, the Chinese have never been very sensitive about the exposure of others' misery to public eyes, so it is understandable that they have carried the 'circuses' to their logical conclusion. In Soviet Russia, after the war, it was reported, a considerable number of 'war criminals' were tried and hanged in public.

Even if the public execution be lacking, may not this be one of the components in the public staging and reporting of the purge trials which have been so regular a feature of Soviet Russia since 1936 and the countries dominated by the U.S.S.R. since 1945? Politically and psychologically, these trials are extremely complicated phenomena, for which no single explanation is adequate. But, supposing for the moment that the accused were guilty of all the crimes of which they are accused, the manner in which the 'trials' are staged and reported would still call for comment; and certainly a prominent aspect of all of them has been the humiliation of the 'broken' men, formerly so prominent, who

are exhibited to the largest possible public making abject confessions. They are meant to be Dreadful Warnings, like the publicly-executed criminals of the eighteenth and earlier centuries; but it is at least possible that the mass audiences (all fully employed) get pleasure in seeing their erstwhile superiors reduced to the puppet-like automata that the M.V.D. and their pupils can make out of any human being in time.

There is no means of knowing whether the men in the Kremlin or their deputies take into calculation the politically sedative aspects of gratified sadism when they order trials to receive the maximum of publicity, or, on another level, insist that hatred be developed in school children. There would certainly be no public admission of this, for it is contrary to official dogma; at the same time it is a deeply-held Marxist belief that 'nothing happens by accident' and a good Bolshevik should be fully conscious of the effect of any of his actions. The probability, I think, is that these secondary effects are not calculated. Like their Western colleagues, the Russian professional politicians are naïve as far as theoretical psychology is concerned. Like all successful politicians everywhere, they have an intuitive knowledge of the peoples they govern and manipulate, far greater than that of any academic student of politics or psychology; but they cannot put into words all the reasons for their actions.

WESTERN 'CIRCUSES'

In the Western democracies the use of 'circuses' is almost certainly not calculated by the governments, to the extent that they employ them. By and large the provision of gratification for sadistic wishes and fantasies is left to private enterprise, which does this very efficiently. Far and away the most popular type of literature published in English is that concerned with death, danger and man-hunts—the thriller, the detective story, the 'action' comics. The films are ingenious in finding ever new situations in which men and women can appear to be tortured, mutilated and killed in novel and ingenious ways. And in England the more popular Press makes two-fold provision by reporting in fulsome detail the more shocking cases of cruelty to children and animals, and at the same time righteously demanding that the torturers themselves be tortured. This has been a popular English compromise at least since the enormous diffusion of Foxe's and Wright's *Book of Martyrs*; we can gloat over the most vivid descriptions and depictions of torture and death with complete self-approval.

There are, however, signs that some of the governments of the Western democracies are inclining towards the official or quasi-official use of 'circuses'. This has been most marked in the United States with the development of what is called 'McCarthyism'—character assassination under privileged circumstances without redress for the accused. Senator McCarthy himself has become notorious for accusing people of Communist sympathies or affiliations with quite inadequate evidence; but from the angle which we are considering, the truth or falsity of the accusations is quite irrelevant. The widely publicised and televised Kefaufer hearings, investigating the undisputed existence of organised and illegal gambling, also presented the nation-wide televiewers with a 'circus'.

A DREADFUL WARNING

In England our defences against sadism and our dislike of demagogy are both strong, but some attempts have been made in recent years to elicit popular enjoyment at the discomfort of others—some 'spite' legislation, some verminous remarks, some ex-Cabinet ministers who think it 'fun' when the Stock Exchange is thrown into confusion by a forecast of legislation, and invite the public to gloat with them at other people's distress. The sadist always reduces his victim from a human being to a thing without rights; when it is considered praiseworthy to enjoy the sufferings of categories of people—Trotzkyists, spies, stockbrokers, capitalists, gangsters, Communists, whites, reds, Negroes, atheists, Jews, or Arabs—on the ground that such people have less than human rights, then public 'circuses' are coming nearer.

To my mind, the gratifying of sadistic impulses by government actions is extremely dangerous for democracies. When part of the population is degraded and treated as less than human, then everybody who consciously participates, if only

as an approving spectator, becomes to some extent degraded and less than human himself. This is no great loss for an authoritarian government, which regards the mass of the population as material to be manipulated, less 'human' than the governing classes. If gratified sadism acts as a political sedative, and also (like a real intoxicating drug) lowers the vitality and undermines the will-power of its addicts, it is serving a double end for totalitarians. But democratic politicians, who try to harness the forces of sadism to advance their own career or that of their party, are undermining one of the bases on which the theory and practice of democracy rest —the equality of all citizens before the law, and the unique value of each citizen as a person. If this analysis is correct, 'Bread and Circuses' is a sinister political formula with immediate relevance for an understanding of the contemporary international scene; it provides both a clue and a Dreadful Warning.

The British system for netting habitual criminals is neat and effective but unjust

THE HABITUAL CRIMINAL

FREDERICK LAWTON

WHEN the Victorians built prisons in the county towns of England and Wales, they usually put up two large houses near the prison gates, one for the Governor and one for the Chaplain. After the Governor, the Chaplain was the most important man on the staff. The Governor's task was to prevent crime by the terror of the punishment which he could impose; the Chaplain's, to prevent crime by inducing a fear of God. The formula did not work, so the Prison Commissioners began to lose faith in chaplains. They put doctors into chaplains' quarters and in most prisons they employed chaplains on the same terms as to hours (if not salaries) as psychiatrists—part time.

Has the new formula worked any better? The measure of its success is described in Dr. Norval Morris's book *The Habitual Criminal*[1]. All who think that they are knowledgeable about criminals should read it. Elderly judges, who are convinced after twenty years or so on the Bench that long sentences deter criminals, will find themselves confronted with telling evidence that such sentences do nothing of the kind. Sentimentalists who think that criminals can be turned from crime by a few kind words will learn that sentences such as fines, binding-over and the like, do not protect the public for so long as penal sentences; when confirmed criminals are given 'the chance' for which they so often plead, an average of 491 days passes before the next conviction—but memory of a sentence of imprisonment keeps the same class of criminal out of prison for an average of 640 days. Moralists who argue that environment has little bearing on crime will find themselves refuted by evidence tending to show that seventy per cent of habitual criminals come from broken homes.

This is a remarkable book. It lays bare the social problem presented by the habitual offender. And what a problem it is! During 1949 (the last year for which figures are available) the average daily population of prisons and Borstal institutions in England and Wales was 19,879 and in that year £4,429,055 was spent by the Prison Commissioners at an average annual cost per prisoner of £198 2s. 9d. Out of this prison population no less than 668 had been previously convicted more than twenty times and 1,905 more than ten times; 46.1 per cent of them had already served six or more sentences of imprisonment.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT 1948

The Prevention of Crimes Act, 1908, was expected to solve the problem. All criminals who were found by juries to be habitual criminals were to be detained in

28 [1] *The Habitual Criminal* by Norval Morris. Published by Longmans, Green and Co. for the London School of Economics. 27s. 6d.

special institutions for long periods. Two snags arose. First, the judges construed the procedural provisions of the Act so strictly against the Crown that the police could seldom charge a man with being an habitual criminal. Secondly, when such charges were preferred, juries were reluctant to convict on them. The *Criminal Justice Act, 1948*, removes both snags. Procedure has been simplified and the judge alone now decides (subject, of course, to review by the Court of Criminal Appeal) whether the accused's past conduct has been such that preventive detention for between five and ten years is expedient for the protection of the public. Between 1931 and 1948 a total of 295 persons were convicted of being habitual criminals under the Prevention of Crimes Act, 1908; but under the *Criminal Justice Act, 1948*, in 1949 alone, 268 men and 11 women were sentenced to periods of preventive detention.

Great Britain's solution for the problem, as set out in the *Criminal Justice Act, 1948*, compares well with the solutions adopted in four Dominions, one self-governing British colony and thirteen European countries. Dr. Morris makes the comparison with a concise thoroughness. But he makes no comparison with the solutions adopted in the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. When I read his book I wondered why—and when I made some inquiries, I found that these two political giants have nothing with which the penal systems of the Western European states can be compared.

SOVIET AND AMERICAN SYSTEM

Reliable information about the Soviet penal system is sparse. Statutes, as we would call such governmental decrees as are issued, are not published in any official series but have to be found in a wide variety of publications. In 1934 H.M. Foreign Office published a translation of the Soviet Penal Code. There is no mention in this Code of the habitual criminal as such. In each case a wide choice of penalties is available and the more severe penalties are intended for the punishment of those who are 'socially dangerous'.

If simplicity is the characteristic of the Soviet penal system, chaos is that of the American. In the U.S.A., the treatment of habitual criminals depends upon the law of each State. Three patterns can be discerned: the tough, the very tough, and the plain 'stupid'. In twenty-nine States, on a second conviction, the offender becomes liable to greatly increased penalties. In nineteen States the sentence is doubled or trebled on a third conviction and in six States the Courts *must* pass a sentence of life imprisonment for a third conviction for felony. In thirteen States the Courts *must* pass a sentence of life imprisonment on a fourth conviction for felony. In only eleven of the forty-one States which have special legislation for dealing with persistent offenders, have the Courts any discretion in sentencing such offenders, and even where a discretion is given, there is usually a minimum sentence. In New York State, for example, five years' imprisonment is the minimum sentence for a second or third offence and fifteen years' for a fourth. Two results follow: American criminals carry guns and American Courts connive at flagrant evasions of the law. In 1936 in Kansas three out of every four of the convicted criminals liable to double or life sentences were sentenced as first offenders!

UNJUST SENTENCES

Does the British taxpayer get value for all the public money which is being spent in dealing with habitual criminals? In one sense he does, because the British system as set out in the *Criminal Justice Act, 1948*, is probably the best there is anywhere. The method used for netting habitual criminals is neat and effective; and those who are caught are treated in a seemly manner which is not likely to upset the public conscience unduly. But before long, Justice will intervene and judges will begin to appreciate, as did the juries who tried cases under the Prevention of Crimes Act, 1908, that sentences of preventive detention are unsound juridically and that the need for protecting the public can never justify that which is unjust. Every sentence of preventive detention is an unjust sentence: it is not a punishment for a particular crime but an extra punishment for past crimes which have already been expiated by punishment. Penitent thieves are not made in this way.

The Surrealists were perhaps the last Romantics. The world of literature and art would be—and, it fact, is—the flatter and feebler without them

FAREWELL TO SURREALISM

CYRIL CONNOLLY

LOOKING back upon Surrealism—for, although the movement is still active in Paris under its vigorous leader, the momentum decreases, the fissions multiply—we cannot fail to become more and more impressed by the spectacle of what was without question the greatest artistic commotion of the twentieth century and one of the few enlargements of sensibility in the last thirty years which stand to the credit of humanity.

There is a tendency to discuss Surrealism and Cubism as if one proceeds out of the other, but in fact there is no similarity. Cubism was a way of painting which a group of painters imposed on themselves, Surrealism a philosophy of life put forward by a band of poets. The first was essentially a method of breaking up the object and putting it together again according to concepts of pictorial structure, a phase of the greatest importance in the development of such painters as Picasso, Braque, Marcoussis and Gris, but affecting literature only through Apollinaire, and life hardly at all. The second was the attempt of a highly organised group to change life altogether, to make a new kind of man. *Le surréalisme n'est pas une école littéraire ou critique. C'est un état d'esprit. A notre époque, seule l'imagination peut rendre aux hommes menacés le sentiment d'êtres libres.* ('Surrealism is neither a literary school nor a method of criticism. It is a state of mind. In our time, only the imagination can give back to mankind in peril the idea of liberty') —invitation to the International Surrealist Exhibition in Amsterdam. So in discussing Surrealism it is necessary to forget terms like Cubist, Fauve, Abstract, Post-Impressionist—which belong to painting, as Symbolist belongs to poetry—and to think of Surrealism as a new interpretation of life, as the name of one of the last and fiercest explosions in our human consciousness which has been detonating since Heraclitus and Galileo. This last combustion, whose effects we are still experiencing, was brought about by a few young poets dreaming of what man ought to be. As Aragon wrote, *It's a question of arriving at a new declaration of the rights of man.*

II

Why a group? 'Here's the essential thing. A group is the beginning of everything. The isolated individual can do nothing, reach nowhere. A properly directed group can do a great deal and has a good chance of getting results which one man would never be in a position to obtain. You don't realise your own situation. You are all in prison. All you want, if you are in your right mind, is to escape. But how can we escape? We must break through the walls, dig a tunnel. One man can accomplish nothing. But suppose there are ten or twenty and that they all take their turn; by combining together they can finish the tunnel and escape. Besides, no one can escape from the prison without the help of those who have got out already.' (Gurdjiev, quoted by Ouspensky, quoted by the Surrealists.)

III

In the beginning was the word. The word was 'Dada'. The darkest moments of European wars are strangely propitious to new movements in art. There is an awareness of absolutes, a closing-in on the self; like those pine cones which germinate only in forest fires, the rarest talents are liberated by the deepest despair. Zürich, Swiss capital of German humanism, was the scene in 1916–17 of a strange incubation. Here, while the battle of Verdun was raging, James Joyce was quietly working on *Ulysses*, here collected the war-weary and war-desperate, displaced neutrals or refugees from conscription like the German war-poet Hugo Ball, who opened in 1916 the *Cabaret Voltaire*. In it congregated Richard Huelsenbeck, another German

poet in exile; Jean Arp, Alsatian poet, sculptor and painter; Tristan Tzara, young Rumanian poet. The fear of extinction which dominated the group led to a concerted attempt to render ridiculous the powers which were destroying the world they knew. Choosing the word 'Dada' haphazard from a dictionary (according to the legend), they baptized their revolt against futility in terms of futility.

The movement had no positive quality but an exhibitionism of the Absurd; being against 'art' (*Art is rubbish*, wrote Jacques Vaché in 1918), its only medium was nonsense—the use of nonsense in public to discredit all forms of sense. This nihilism suited the angry despair of German intellectuals in defeat, and Dada groups soon formed in Berlin, Hanover and Cologne, contributing Baader, Baargeld, Kurt Schwitters, Max Ernst and many others. Meanwhile a similar trend had come into the open in New York where Marcel Duchamp from Paris, Picabia from Barcelona and Man Ray, in their prophetic discontent, had published the review *291*. After the war all these bands converged on Paris. The greater the ability, the deeper the disgustability—only thus can we explain the presence of such pure artists as Ernst, Arp and Schwitters or the three painters from America in this troupe of destructive harlequins.

In Paris, Tzara and Baargeld, with their sublime Dadaist effrontery, immediately triumphed; art and life were rejected as impostures equally vile. The first to rally round the invaders from the East was a handful of very young poets, just released from their war service: André Breton, a medical student, and Louis Aragon, a law student, Paul Eluard, Philippe Soupault, Benjamin Péret. (Breton himself had been greatly influenced by an isolated and undeclared Dadaist, Jacques Vaché, who had just committed suicide.) In 1919 this disillusioned group had founded the magazine *Littérature*, in 1920 Breton and Soupault collaborated in *Les Champs Magnétiques* and Max Ernst gave an exhibition in Paris of his first *collages*, with Breton's introduction. All sought inspiration in three isolated and unfortunate geniuses of the nineteenth century, poets with a contempt for humanity and a deep hatred of 'literature'; Lautréamont, Rimbaud and Jarry. Both the Dadaists and the young French band, however, revered the poet of the *avant-garde* and interpreter of Cubism whose death was so recent, Apollinaire.

At first the combination seemed to work smoothly, giving birth to books, magazines, pictures and, above all, to scandal-making public meetings, until towards the end of 1921 a quarrel of capital importance broke out between Breton and Tzara. Breton was fundamentally a poet who wished to facilitate the germination of new beauty from those lofty arts which the necessary whirlwind of Dada had uprooted. Tzara was the destructive showman. 'The true Dadaist is against Dada'—this terrible and logical axiom of Tzara would in the end render all action impossible. The absurd cannot engender even absurdity without some order creeping in. In Dada the pendulum of European vitality had reached the extreme point of its arc, the impetus of defeat and despair had exhausted itself, and as Communism was now replacing nihilism, capitalism beginning its recovery, Mussolini marching on Rome, insulin and the tomb of Tutankhamen being discovered, so Breton's party won. Dada abdicated and Surrealism was born.

IV

Surrealism—out of respect to Apollinaire the word was borrowed from his last play-title—means the reality which lies beyond what we call real. As a former medical student who had treated the shell-shocked, Breton was familiar with Freud and, after the revelation of automatic writing which occasioned his first book with Soupault, it was clear to him that the reality beyond reality (Nerval's 'supernaturalism') was the subconscious mind, the universal truth that underlies all poetry, all imagery, all desire and which Lautréamont and Rimbaud had drawn on inexhaustibly, the truth in reach of all that reason is bribed to deny. The German Dada movement, however, was inclined to Bolshevism and was as susceptible to Marx as were the Surrealists to Freud. The revolutionary element in Surrealism was therefore twofold: it was a revolt of the psyche, against

the authority of reason; it was also an appeal to reason to liberate man from his oppressors—family, church, fatherland, boss. It embraced both Freud and Hegel, the promenade which the iron pot in the fable forces on the uneasy earthenware vessel had already begun.

The early years of the group, before the inner tensions became intolerable, can only be described as magical. The youthful Surrealists possessed talent, courage and charm: they had also experienced a revelation, a glimpse of a dream-dazzled world: 'The marvellous is always beautiful, anything that is marvellous is beautiful; indeed nothing but the marvellous is beautiful,' wrote Breton. They lived only for these mystic glimpses and for each other; while the group held together, and was strong enough to pulverise its enemies, excommunication from it was a kind of torture. Meeting in large cafés on Montmartre or in the now-demolished Passage de l'Opéra, drinking Mandarin-curaçaos, whiling the afternoons away applauding at films in the wrong places, they would pass the evening in conversation, composition, confession or love, being driven on by an apostolic intoxication of liberty. To a conventional young Englishman they represented the very arcana of Paris, the spirit of insurrection arising from its most sacred flaking quarters, the dark and shabby corners which they loved—Buttes Chaumont, Musée Grévin, Rue de la Lune—alight with their revolutionary intelligence and gaiety. I remember seeing them all one summer evening in the fun fair of Luna Park, in the blue suits and white knitted ties they affected, gathering like a band of gibbons around 'La Femme Tronc', a legless, armless wonder with a charming face who was seated on a marble pedestal, signing a photograph of herself for them with a pen held in her teeth. The brotherhood seemed to have long given up all recognised means of livelihood and to exist only for the ecstasy of the mystical experience—'eager to discover the formula and the place.'

V

In this early period the poets dominated the scene. Breton, Aragon, Eluard, Péret, Desnos, Char, Soupault and Crevel—they formed a central committee. Ernst, Miró, Tanguy, Arp, Man Ray, Picabia, were honoured but not the framers of policy. Books like Breton's *Nadja* or Aragon's *Paysan de Paris* or the poems of Eluard and Péret with their affirmations of the dream and hatred of humanism seemed the supreme expression of the movement. But the painters were steadily gaining in authority. They could reach a wider public and, by the nature of their work, they were less involved in political purges. They were allowed to make a reasonable income from their pictures in a manner which was not permitted to those who sought a living from their articles. As Breton wrote: 'Surrealism requires from its participators that they should observe the utmost purity of mind and life . . . and is less ready than ever to accept departures from this purity which are justified by the obscure and revolting pretext that "one must live".'

The dissensions within the movement sprang from three causes: the attempted Freud-Marx synthesis, the Dada legacy and the economic problem. Although automatic writing had been accepted as the principal literary method of Surrealism, as the secret weapon by which reason was to be overthrown and the poetry of superreality placed within reach of all, the new vision had certain inconveniences: it became impossible to earn a living by one's books and thus some of the weaker vessels were driven into journalism, for which they were publicly excommunicated. Nor was it a weapon of much efficacy in the class struggle and one or two persistent dreamers, like Desnos and Artaud, were viciously expelled as a-political. As under Dada, the revolution came first and words were only to be used 'to wring the neck of literature.'

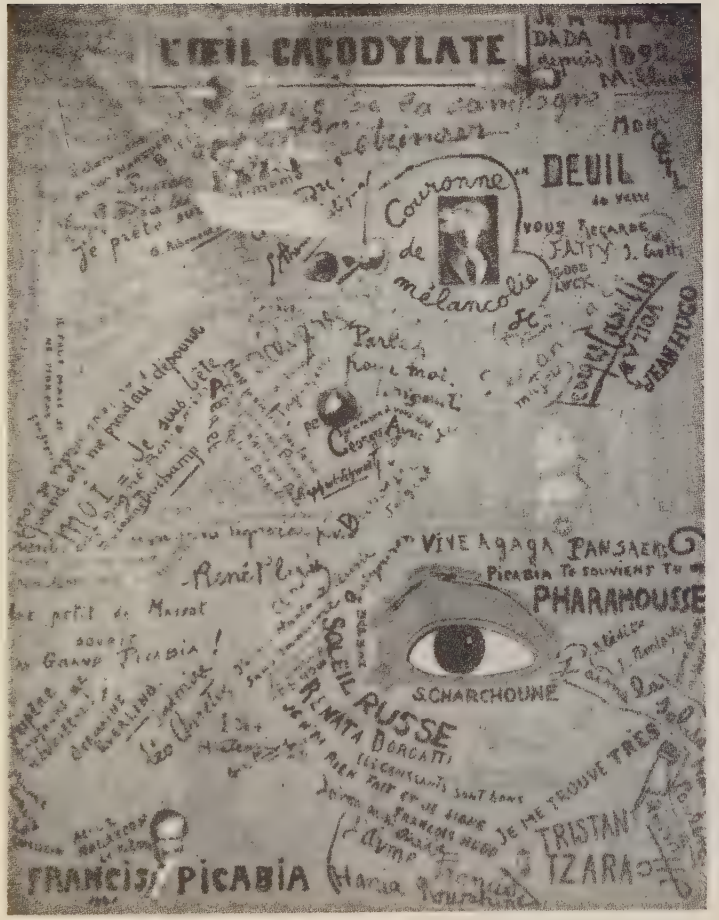
While a team of scientific researchers can devote themselves quietly to their pursuit, the Surrealists had inherited from Dada a taste for public manifestation. The group-spirit evolved according to the laws which govern groups: manifestos, excommunications, public penitences, secret betrayals; it was avid for notoriety and sensation and to miss a meeting was to court disaster. The Surrealists were too dynamic to consider the overthrowing of reason by the unconscious as separate from

HIERONIMUS BOSCH (XV century) *The Magician* *Detail from The Temptation of St. Anthony*

ARCHIMBOLDO (XVI century) *Landscape-head*

FUSELI (XVIII century) *Vision*

Left:
FRANCIS PICABIA, *Study 1930*



Right:
DE CHIRICO
The Melancholy and Mystery of a Street (1914)

ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS
Illustration by John Tenniel

Above: Fur Tea-Cup, MERET OPPENHEIM, 1936
(Museum of Modern Art)

Right: PIERRE ROY, *Danger on the Stairs*
(Museum of Modern Art)

SALVADOR DALI
Construction of Soft Beans
A Premonition of Civil War, 1936

Bedroom in the Paris Exhibition of Surrealism 1936

SALVADOR DALI *The Madonna of Port Lligat (1951)*
By courtesy of the Lefevre Gallery

the destruction of bourgeois capitalism (the society which reason had created), they refused to be called parlour revolutionaries whose activities were merely aesthetic, and therefore they handed themselves over to the Communist Party as Marxist shock troops to be employed as it thought best. The automatic writing of the poets was frequently combined with a vicious polemical style, with 'humour' (in the sense of a macabre, cannibal sadistic gaiety) as the common factor of both. *Un Cadavre*, a pamphlet deriding the obsequies of Anatole France (1924), is the first of the 'jokes in bad taste' with which the group achieved notoriety in the name of integrity. The swing to Communism left several Surrealists behind when Breton—unable to accept the disciplines of a party-line—veered back towards Trotskyism and the formation of an independent aesthetic and revolutionary movement.

Around 1931, the widely advertised defection of Aragon to the Communists and the entry into film-making of Dali altered the balance of power. The visual arts and the exhibitions connected with them attracted far more attention to the movement than Breton's search for his precise political position or automatic writing as 'the communism of genius'. Dali's eventual marriage to Gala, ex-wife of the poet Eluard, seemed a symbolic consecration of the new emphasis.

VI

The master of Surrealist painting was Max Ernst. This great self-taught artist, with his bold eclectic imagination, passed effortlessly from Dada in Cologne into the Freudian Surrealist pantheon. The doctrines of Breton seemed especially created for him. His *collages*, arrangements of cut-out nineteenth-century illustrations to provoke disquieting, ironical and erotic suggestions were, like so much Surrealist art, essentially literary. They adapted the fantastic children's world of half a century before to the sophisticated wonder-seeker. *La femme cent têtes*, 1929, and *Rêve d'une petite fille*, 1930, are somewhat monotonous, but the *Semaine de Bonté* or, rather, the 'Seven Elements' as it was sub-titled, is one of the masterpieces of the movement, a reassembling of lion-headed or bird-faced supermen and their passionate consorts with their adventures 'by flood and field' into a sequence new, beautiful and disturbing—a tragic-strip from the Minotaur's nursery. The romantic nineteenth century was the epoch wherein the Surrealists felt most at home, and Germany the place; in the master from Cologne they possessed a magician who could create around some familiar feature, like Paris's statue of the 'Lion de Belfort', a new mythology of poetry, bloodshed, unrest and nostalgia.

The three great forerunners of Surrealist painting stood in a very different relation. Chirico, whose early work presents a closed world of the imagination, already perfect and passing away, a dream of urban apprehension, a haunted inner city of squares and statues, of freight trains and grief-stricken colonnades in the last second before the explosion, this once most Surrealist of all painters, before the fact, had begun to trick and evade, copying ineffectually his old paintings (according to Breton) and falsifying the dates. He had seen the vision but was unworthy and soon was drifting into the paranoiac false classicism of Mussolini. Chagall remained a little too Oriental: his imagination was like a peasant's fairy story, marvellous, certainly, but without the tragic intelligence of the Surrealists. Picasso, though for a time thoroughly Surrealist, had also been undeniably Cubist and would soon become what else? This giant fish, after reflecting a moment's glory on the Surrealist anglers, would break the net. It was not painters who were Surrealist for whom they were looking, but Surrealists who were painters.

Two more Simon Pures were found in Tanguy and Miró. Tanguy's world was another closed private garden, an allotment of poisonous plants from remoter planets, landscapes of which it would be impossible to say that life doesn't exist in them or to prove that it does. Like many Surrealists, he was obsessed by perspective and, somewhat constricted in his handling of paint, original only in the content of his dream. His world is static, as if he had secret access to an inexhaustible supply of Mars salad and Venus weed. Miró, unlike the others, is essentially a pattern-maker,

an artist in whom an exquisite gaiety seems to be always pouring out in an ever-changing kaleidoscope of shape and colour; he combines the impeccable taste of abstract painters with an irrepressible Catalan warmth and audacity. His pottery is the most beautiful of Surrealist 'objects', his bird-happy colours, the yellows and blues of serenity, pervade all his work.

Arp, the Dadaist wood-cutter, though for long associated with the Surrealist movement, has strong affinities with abstract art. The group's most typical sculptor is rather the earlier Giacometti, whose imagination supplied a note of austerity welcome among the Surrealist flamboyance. His archaic personages are so etiolated by internal conflict as to seem more or less than human; his constructions appear heroic embodiments of frustration, the desire for perfection contrives to bring all his work to a ferocious standstill. His counterpart in painting is undoubtedly Masson, another rugged militant of the arts who has tried to interpret nature with a deep intuition of her violence; through the insect world, whose cruelty is too extreme to leave room for fear or hate, through the giant body whose mountain udders and pubic forests we mortals inhabit, to the cloudy clash of planetary wear-and-tear which we dimly envisage.

VII

In Masson and Giacometti, Surrealism has discovered two of its most original artists with a revolutionary attitude to their mediums. It is they who supply it with some of the emotional discipline and intellectual tension which were the glory of Cubism and which are lacking in the fretful doodling or weary Pre-Raphaelism of many Surrealist painters. On the other side: perspective-haunted, oil-bound conservative, even academic in their treatment, though startling in their choice of subject-matter and bold in imagination, are such typical Surrealist painters as Dali, Magritte, Delvaux, Pierre Roy and Leonor Fini.

Magritte, a very early Surrealist, remains a completely literary painter who startles us by the force and universality of his dream symbols, but who gives us little pictorial quality. With Dali we reach the core of the problem: Dali and Aragon, the two geniuses of the movement, alas were also its two evil geniuses, the right and left deviationists, the one leading on towards salons and *succès de scandale*, Hollywood and shiny-papered fashion magazines; the other into Marxist polemic 'the boring pamphlet and the public meeting,' until each reached his perspective goal, an interview with the Pope, and the editorship of a Communist daily. Dali and his fellow-Spaniard, Bunuel, were responsbible for two famous Surrealist films, *L'Age d'Or* (in which Max Ernst appeared) and *Un chien Andalou.* Man Ray, whose photography can raise the dead, also contributed *Les Mystères du Château de Dé*, a film built round the ultra-modern villa of the Vicomte de Noailles above Hyères, for this family were the Medici and chief patrons of the movement at the end of the golden age.

In the silent film Surrealism had found an almost perfect medium; Man Ray, the painter and photographer who 'drew in light', as Picasso described his work, made three films of increasing lyrical quality before the crisis of the *Age d'Or*; Dali's *Andalusian Dog*, in spite of some superfluous sadism, has a crystalline intensity that reveals unexplored regions of pure cinema; it becomes something far more moving than even the scenario leads one to expect. *The Golden Age* is less concentrated and suffers from an awareness of the new talking films, which the Surrealists didn't have the funds to produce. It contains more shocking material; erotic, blasphemous or anti-social (i.e. kicking the blind) than any picture ever made, but in spite of being a dithyrambic ode to physical passion, it is too disjointed and amateurish to qualify as great. It is a collection of incidents based on the theme of the world well lost for love, orchestrated by the Marquis de Sade. After the scandal which it caused, the cinematic expression of Dali's celebrated paranoia was compelled to filter down through the Marx brothers, reappearing in a much-watered form in his famous Hollywood dream-sequence for *Spellbound.*

The Surrealist object was also removed by Dali from the region of pure sculpture where Giacometti and Arp were confining it and took on a more ephemeral form, as

in the lady's bust enlivened with ants and a necklace of corncobs, with Millet's *Angelus* on a loaf of bread as an inkstand-headdress, which appeared, increasingly mildewed, at several international exhibitions before the famous fur tea-set of Meret Oppenheim took away the spotlight.

Although in theory the Surrealist object was in reach of anyone who chose to put it together, even as poetry was available to all who could hold a pen when half-asleep, it was still the painters who produced the best: the fur-lined tea-set, for instance, is not ridiculous but alarming, for there is something more horrible than one would expect about drinking from a fur-lined cup, tea and cup having a deeply buried Freudian content which the fur brings up to the surface. Dali's red satin sofa, shaped like two closed lips, is another uneasy-chair. The suggestiveness of so much Surrealist art, based on liberating the unconscious, takes effect only on the repressed and so it is among the guilty, puritanical and bottled-up society of Anglo-Saxony that these luxurious objects find new victims. The ascendancy of what Breton called Dali's 'master impulse', in 1931–6, brings Surrealism nearer to the big money and the fashionable crowd. Dali's genius, so dazzling in conception, so reactionary in technique, so original yet so meretricious, is baffling even now. His most recent exhibition in Paris contains some spectacular draftsmanship, painting which seems like a triumph of colour photography, and evidence of that inflation of the ego which brings this academic psychopath from the cove of Cadaqués near to Chirico, who signs his recent pictures 'Pintor Maximus'—a conjuror dazzled by his own skill.

VIII

The later 'thirties were the period of success abroad and dissension within. International exhibitions flourished and Surrealism was launched in Prague, London, New York and Teneriffe, but in 1935 the charming René Crevel, *le plus beau des surréalistes*, and also their most intelligible prose-writer, killed himself, *dégoûté de tout*; Breton's political position grew closer to Trotsky's; manifestos multiply; and the frog-march along the razor's edge perceptibly quickens. The war caught the Surrealists without a clear policy; their hatred of 1914–18 had brought them together, their bewilderment in 1939 now led to their dispersal. They remained for a while in Vichy-France designing their Tarot pack of cards, and then gradually sought asylum in Mexico or the United States. Hating Hitler, they were threatened by Pétain; international, they detested a nationalist war; artists, they were also pacifists; revolutionaries, they yet lacked a political organisation. When Jean Cocteau (the counterfeit Surrealist and private enemy of the movement) was told by a young poet that he was joining the Resistance, he replied 'You are making a mistake; life is too serious for that'—which may be described as the Surrealists' final attitude.

Their arrival in America may be likened in its consequences to that of the Byzantine scholars in Italy after the fall of Constantinople. From that moment 'the Surrealists' were disbanded but Surrealism began to sow itself spontaneously. Dali in Hollywood, Breton and Masson in New York, Péret in Mexico, Ernst in Arizona, were its wandering apostles—the inevitable luxury magazine, a gelded *Minotaur*, appeared as *Triple V*; the Daliesque objects spread to fun-fairs and shop-windows; *Dyn* edited by Paalen appeared in Mexico City; Wifredo Lam, Matta and Gorky and the Caribbean poet Aimé Césaire were acclaimed by Breton. When the exiles returned to Paris, where reason had been re-enthroned by Sartre, they had left behind what was the worst in Surrealism—a flourishing commercial formula beloved of window-dressers or a façade for rich complex lightweights, for few, alas, were the disciples who had understood the astonishing galaxy of ideas which Breton had all his life so harmoniously assembled and so passionately, if obscurely, expounded—his home-made revolution: *'Changez la vie!'*

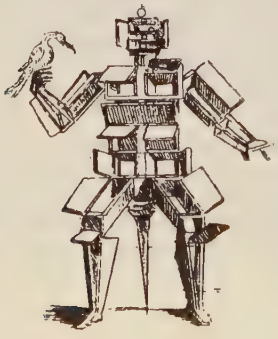
IX

For we cannot bid farewell to Surrealism without a formal tribute to its founder. This much-loved, much-hated and therefore enigmatic figure, has accomplished far more than Apollinaire; he formed and led

his group of writers and artists instead of merely interpreting them; his distinguished bull-like appearance, as of a serious Oscar Wilde, with some of Wilde's dignity and benevolence and none of his vulgarity, reflects a strange mixture of qualities, the ability to lead, inspire, deceive and threaten, to criticise and create, to love and command both jealous rivals and the envious young. His own writing, with its seventeenth-century fullness, at its best in *Nadja* or in the straightforward criticism of *Les Pas Perdus* rather than when married to the welling, inexhaustible fountain of Eluard's poetry, achieves (as in his description of the peak of Teneriffe) an extraordinary vigour. Condemned by the logic of the times to lead his flock along the *arête* between militant Marxism and introverted lunacy, this reason-hating intellectual brought safely over as many as he could. Besides Eluard, Aragon, Péret, Crevel, Hugnet and Gracq, one must admire his influence on many ex-Surrealists, such as Paulham, Pongé, Prévert, Queneau and Leiris, who are well-known today. His passion for art not only gave painters the feeling that their ideas were important, but inclined him towards those who were truly original rather than to the fashionable antiquarians, while he was quick to discover the Surrealist content of much primitive and popular art.

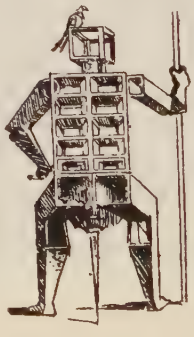
Without the Surrealist movement, 'surrealism' might still have come into being; the unconscious would have found other aesthetic interpreters, but under Breton's guidance the synthesis between Freud and Marx was attempted many years in advance, as a parachuted battalion can attack an objective weeks ahead of schedule. A share of the faults of totalitarian leaders was not lacking, but seldom has one man's intellectual honesty, courage and passion for beauty enriched us more. Always with the Surrealists, in spite of their lapses into vulgarity and spiteful pettiness, one is conscious of the dedicated life; of the whole conception of *bourgeois* living being utterly rejected for the sake of a mystical idea—*le merveilleux*: 'Neither a school nor a clique, much more than an attitude, Surrealism, is, in the most complete and aggressive sense of the term, an adventure,' proclaims a manifesto of May 1951, an adventure which has not recoiled from madness and suicide in the search for inspiration, for the vision which is not always compatible with art, which may destroy art and literature and sometimes life itself. If Surrealism is to perish, it will be because the world we live in renders ineffectual the private rebellion of the individual and because the symbols and battlecries of the Unconscious—Sade, Ubu, Maldorer, Oedipus—awake no answering revolt in a generation which finds its predicament too serious even for Surrealism!

They were, perhaps, the last Romantics. Despite the shapeless obscurity of so much of their writing, despite their rejection of the advances made by Impressionism, Fauvism and Cubism for 'the rehabilitation of academic art under a new literary disguise' (as critic Clement Greenberg has written), the world of literature and art would be—and, in fact, is—the flatter and feebler without them. They have restored to man, love-child of fatality and chance, the belief in his destiny; they have given woman back her pride and her magic; they have handed the imagery of the unconscious over to poetry and returned freedom of subject to painting, imprisoned by its own rules. To the question 'What does that picture represent?' the Surrealists make answer: 'The person who did it.'



FURNITURE FIGURES

from the *Capricci* of Bracelli, 1624



3

JACQUES COPEAU

There is not a writer, or an actor, who does not owe something to him

J. CHIARI

Special Lecturer in French Literature and Language, Manchester University

JACQUES COPEAU has not written any poetic drama, but as a critic, a man of letters and above all as a producer and actor, he has exercised a unique influence on the French stage in the last decades. If in this country the revival of poetic drama, which began in the 1930s, was helped and sustained by the efforts of men like E. Martin Browne and Ashley Dukes, the return of poetry to the French stage owes an ever greater debt to the single-minded efforts of Jacques Copeau.

In spite of the existence of writers like Maeterlinck, Rostand and others, acting and producing during the last decades of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century were in bondage to realism and commercialism. The plays which were produced had, first and foremost, to be commercial successes, and in order to make them successful, for such seems to have been the mood of the time, these plays had to be true mirrors of life, both in their substance and production. In those days, realism and naturalism had secured a firm grip on all the arts, and to get an idea of it, we have only to think of the feats of ingenuity which were performed at the *Théâtre Antoine* in order to bring realism to the stage. Instead of aiming at placing the spectator in a world of make-believe, in a world of poetic convention, with imaginative themes and heightened speech, authors, producers and actors were all thoroughly engrossed in the most slavish imitation of what is described as 'reality'. The stage had to be a mirror with a smooth polished surface, reflecting in its most minute details the trivialities of everyday life; gestures had to conform to the same pattern, and stage-diction sought to remain as close as possible to that of the plain man. Art tended more and more towards photography; indeed, the time was ripe for the development of photography, for the cinema, which was going to outpace all other attempts at being realistic, and compel the other arts to revert to their essence and to try to be true to their origins. That the need for such a change was already felt is evident by the efforts of men like W. B. Yeats and the founders of the Abbey Theatre in Ireland, by those of William Poël, Granville Barker

and Gordon Craig in this country, and by the efforts made in other countries by men like Pirandello, Meyerbold, Reinhardt and Stanislavsky. France, the country of political revolutions, was as usual the most traditional in the arts, and was, therefore, the last to free her stage from the shackles of realism; and that was the work of Copeau.

Jacques Copeau was a man of great and varied gifts. He saw at once the ills from which the theatre was dying; indeed, few men have had his clear-sightedness, his sharp vision of the true state of the theatre and of the remedies to be applied; and certainly fewer have had a loftier conception of their art. He was a kind of Flaubert of the stage, a monk in a new monastic order. For him the theatre was a kind of ritual, something mysterious, religious, as it had been at its beginnings. We have all seen pictures and read descriptions of the austere settings of the *Vieux-Colombier* with its blue-grey backcloth, its scanty furniture, and of Copeau and his company performing with ritualistic, impressive dignity. His influence was tremendous; his presence blew away all naturalistic cobwebs and realistic trappings, and poetry returned to the stage with all the honour which it had enjoyed in great ages. The actor became the object of his unfailing attention; he knew that good acting is a whole-time job, which requires the full growth and the continued liveliness of gifts without which stage-performances can never reach the level of memorable artistic experiences. The list of the names of the actors and producers who won their first laurels with Copeau affords us a glimpse of his achievements; it is a list which comprises the names of some of the most remarkable actors and producers of our times—Jouvet, Pitoeff, Baty, Michel St. Denis, Dullin, and as pupil of Dullin, J. L. Barrault; it is, I think, difficult to muster a more brilliant galaxy.

Copeau had been revolted by the state in which he found the theatre at the end of the nineteenth century, and the account of his analysis, in an article entitled '*Lieux Communs*' published in *L'Emitage* (15 February 1905), gives us an idea of his analytical powers, of his wisdom, and of the magnitude of the task he set to himself. Here are some of his remarks: 'The theatre, even the theatre which describes itself as serious, has fallen into the lower realms of frivolous occupations. The most fatal kind of inspiration which might visit an artist is dramatic inspiration. He knows that and shuns it. If he accepts it, he will be reduced to surrender or to starvation. The indifference of the public and the apathy of dramatic criticism are the accomplices of that state of affairs. The theatre managers and their hirelings have one single preoccupation—will my play make money? They have of course very heavy burdens to bear, but none is heavier than the actors' greed. Vain and arrogant, the latter are the true masters of the situation; their whims, their despotic ignorance rule the stage. A play is unrecognisable once it has passed through their hands. They modify the text, add, delete and transform it to suit themselves, they are supposed to be the collaborators of the authors, and they are their tormentors. The authors are only concerned in seeing their plays performed, their characters are made to suit the actors . . . we could name writers who once upon a time carried with them our hopes; now they have achieved success. Each new production shows the progress of their downfall, each success is for them a defeat.' This is a formidable indictment of the state of the theatre at the dawn of the century, and we cannot but reflect that, in spite of Copeau's and other like-minded people's efforts, this indictment is far from having lost all its topicality and pungency.

Copeau saw clearly that great art cannot be confined to any one single aspect of life; he saw that it could neither be devoted to being moralising or sociological, nor merely idealistic or realistic. He knew that art must aim at painting resemblances suggesting Life in its wholeness, that it must try to extract from things their essential life, and that it must allow speech to rise from them and not speak for them or judge them. Indeed, the poet's single concern must be the poem—the rest—social message, philosophy, etc., can only be incidental to, and not the aim of, the poem. There is a great deal to be said for

Synge's view that 'true drama is like a symphony, a beautiful creation which is an end in itself and proves nothing.'

What were the means employed by Copeau to deal with the task that he had undertaken? He has expounded his views in a long essay published in the *N.R.F.* (September 1939); the best thing to do seems to me to give an abridged version of his arguments, and here are the main points. 'We have no formula, no revolutionary programme (as *Antoine* and *Le Théâtre* like). We do not know what tomorrow's theatre will be; we only wish to re-act against the defects of the contemporary theatre and to offer a stage to future talents . . . our first aim is to restore prestige to the stage by showing our respect for the classics; we shall try to recapture their original freshness, but we shall never try to trim them in order to suit the taste of the day. On no account shall we ever do that, for to attempt to restore an outward youth to what is eternal, or to give a wrapping of modern verisimilitude to what overflows with truth would be a strange amusement indeed. We shall not indulge in such fantasies. The whole and only originality of our interpretation, if we can show any, shall rest on nothing but a profound knowledge of the text. . . . We could never study too much that aspect of producing which deals with the interpretation of the text. We do not want to attach any importance to anything connected with *décor* and stage designs. . . . It is not because we cannot appreciate the art of creating a dramatic climate by means of colour, light and shapes; we have indeed followed the experiments by Messrs. Meyerbold, Stanislavsky, Max Reinhardt, Gordon Craig and others, and we realise, as everybody else does, the advantage of *décors* which tend to suggest things over *décors* which attempt to give a realistic illusion of things. But these methods are by now too widely accepted, too well-known, for anybody to dare to claim, without ridicule, the merit of applying them. If we apply them, we shall do so with restraint. Above all, we are opposed to systems; we intend to remain faithful to common sense and good taste, and we must aver from being sometimes shocked by the pedantic heaviness of some of the ideas of the masters mentioned above. We find certain attempts to stress poets' intentions with concrete and sometimes naïve means rather offensive to the traditional moderation and subtlety of French taste . . . we fear that the application of such methods, together with a constant pursuit of the sensational (a fruitless pursuit when applied to the great classical works) might lead to artificial, uncouth and quasi-barbaric productions. I feel that to allow myself to be carried away by engineers' and electricians' inventions is to grant painted canvas or cardboard an undeserved pre-eminence; in one way or another that means subservience to stage tricks, and whether they are old or new, we repudiate stage tricks. In fact, whether machinery is good or bad, rudimentary or fully developed, artificial or realistic, we intend to grant no importance to machinery. . . . For we are convinced that it is disastrous to load dramatic art with a burden of external complexities such that in the end it strains and dilutes its strength, encourages the picturesque, and transforms drama into fairy-tale. We do not believe that in order to represent man in its wholeness, we require a theatre in which the *décor* can rise from the stage instantaneously, we do not believe that the future of our art is a question of machinery, and we shall endeavour to express truth through the feelings and actions of the dramatic characters.'

Here was a man of extraordinary integrity, a man who had vision and strength of purpose, and who knew what poetry was. He had in him a grain of that quality which makes saints and great men; he knew that in order to rise, one has to divest oneself of all human trappings and ambitions; that it is by laying one's soul bare, by kneeling humbly in a state of innocent expectation at the feet of Truth or Poetry, that either may come and may live through you. He knew instinctively that neither poetry nor truth can ever be attained by prominent 'egos' eager to wear them as triumphant feathers. He knew that possession is only the illusion of one's own predatory self, and that in order to reach the possibilities of Truth, one has

to cease desiring it. Copeau had the soul of a poet, and when he approached the Greeks, Shakespeare or Racine, he approached them with reverence and with the conviction that their words contained poetry which no human device could improve. He knew that those words trailed with them music and memories of times older than man, reaching beyond man, since they are the unchanging sources of music and memories. If he could not see:

The cloud capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,

he knew that Prospero's master alone could see those things, and he was fully aware that no amount of stage-craft and device could add to such visions. He did not attempt to improve Shakespeare or Sophocles, to bring them up to date, or to clean them up. He left that mighty task to Cocteau and others. He followed the example of the angels.

What has been the outcome of his teaching, of his strong influence and of his outstanding example of artistic scrupulousness? When he died, in 1949, Jouvet said 'There is not a writer, nor an actor who does not owe something to him. I owe everything to him.' Dullin and J. L. Barrault said the same thing, and Michel St. Denis would, I am sure, have agreed. Now Dullin has died, but Jouvet and Barrault kept alive in France some of the traditions of Copeau. Both Jouvet and Barrault maintained very high standards for actors' training and for production, and in spite of the fact that they have felt, in various degrees, the impact of the Russian ballet on scenery and acting, they both maintained their faith in the text.

On the other hand, one cannot help noting how far staging has strayed from Copeau's artistic views. German and Russian influences now hold sway on the French as well as on other stages. Cocteau, besides rejuvenating old myths and masterpieces, revels in machinery with simultaneous *décor*, with talking horses, men floating in the air and other devices which are in their place in the cinema, but have nothing much to do with the stage. In France, as in this country and in others, many producers are too intent on shining by any kind of means, including fantastic settings, strange groupings and a diction and timing which must bear the indelible mark of their personality. Nowadays we must talk of Mr. X's Henry IV, or Mr. Y's Hamlet or Phèdre. I belong to that category of people who still like to see Shakespeare's *Henry IV* or *Hamlet*, and Racine's *Phèdre*, and more often than not I would gladly give away any of those slick productions which bear the imprint of the author's strenuous brain-work, for a straightforward production by E. Martin Browne, J. Gielgud, or Pierre Dux.

Nowadays the influence of the ballet on the theatre is such that some producers set their actors dancing with their lines and attempt to replace words by movements. J. L. Barrault, whom I admire as an actor, goes much too far in that direction. The influence of the *Commedia dell' Arte*, and of the Nietzschean conception of tragedy and dance have led him along a regressive path which strays far away from poetry. Dance is one thing; poetry is another—they are both forms of art, but they are not interchangeable, for they are fundamentally different. One cannot dance the battle of Actium gestures, and miming in that case, as in most cases except where they are restrained and part of the stage rhetoric, can only limit the evocative power of the poem. In spite of his sumptuous settings, Jouvet never went as far as Barrault in his love of machinery, and on the whole he remained closer and truer to French tradition. He retained a great deal of Copeau's rigorism, of his priest-like attitude to the theatre, and if he lost his master's austerity, he retained his love of truth and his faith in the sacred mission of the theatre. Nobody has done more for Molière than Jouvet, and Molière has in no way suffered in the process. If the scenery has been stylised, the scrupulous respect of the text, the high quality of the acting, make of those performances theatrical highlights of our time. Anybody who has seen Jouvet in the great parts created by Molière will agree that he well deserved to be styled 'A classic rejuvenated'.

Jouvet was with J. Copeau the most outstanding man of the theatre which France has produced since the days of Molière.

He was a great 'comedian' and a great producer and his friends will regret his kind heart as much as his admirers will miss his dramatic gifts.

In spite of the commercialism which seems to have gained the upper hand in the theatre, both here and in France, in spite of the fact that not a few of the old successes have returned to the stages of London and Paris, in spite of the even more deplorable fact that some of those theatres try to compete with the lusciousness and gilded trappings of the Folies Bergères or the Casinos of London or Paris, or with the extravagance of surrealist paintings, there are producers who still believe that intelligence and understanding of the text do not require vast sums of money to be invested in productions, and it is through such men that the shining spirit of Copeau still lives.

Wozzeck

HUMPHREY SEARLE

'Wozzeck' has at last reached Covent Garden, twenty-seven years after its première in Berlin, and thirty after the music was completed. Though the splendid production has made ample amends for the delay, the time-lag has given some critics the excuse for regarding the work merely as a period piece. Nothing could be further from the truth, as the history of the opera shows. Georg Büchner's play is set in the epoch after the Napoleonic Wars, and was written eighty years before Berg saw it in 1914 in a Vienna then at the height of its swaggering military brilliance. Berg at once decided to make the play into an opera, and completed the text during his service in the Austrian army; the music was written between 1917 and 1921. The opera thus has links with three very different periods, and cannot only be connected with the tragic disillusion which accompanied the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as some critics have implied; in fact, it is a universal story, and could have been written or set in any age.

It is true that the characters are very vividly drawn, but one cannot say that they are all grotesques, or that there is no good element in any one of them; almost all of them show the contradictions which make up every human nature. The Captain is pompous, fussy, overbearing, yet also afraid of things he does not understand; the Doctor is a single-minded fanatic, bent on pursuing what he considers to be the true interests of science, no matter what inconvenience it may cause to others; Marie is an emotional woman torn between sexual desires, love of her child and remorse at her betrayal of Wozzeck; while Wozzeck himself is by no means a mere half-wit, but combines his irrational terrors and the emotional outbursts which cause him to kill both Marie and himself with the qualities of patience and forbearance. There is, in fact, a strong Christian element in *Wozzeck*, which may be seen not only in the many quotations from the Bible, but in the general approach towards the human problems with which the characters are confronted. Wozzeck is not just another Little Man doomed to suffer at the hands of a harsh and aggressive world, but he is also the symbol of the essential goodness which is in every human being, and which may be, and often is, combined with other and far less good qualities. If Büchner and Berg gave a tragic solution to the problem in this case, it certainly does not imply that they approached it in a spirit of pure pessimism or nihilism. On the contrary, there is a strongly constructive side to their thinking, which is implied, if not fully stated, throughout.

But *Wozzeck* is, of course, not simply a moral tract; it is an intensely dramatic and moving opera. And it is an opera of an entirely individual type; in fifteen short scenes, and containing only just over two hours of music, it combines all types of vocal technique—speech, song, and 'speech-song'—with the new instrumental timbres and harmonic effects which were the discovery of Berg's teacher, Arnold Schoenberg. Nothing like this had ever been attempted before on such a scale; and yet the opera was a popular success from the start. This was due to Berg's extraordinarily instinctive grasp of dramatic necessity; one can never guess in advance what is coming next, yet when it comes, it sounds exactly right, even if entirely unexpected. Berg had learnt a great deal from Schoenberg; the latter's 'monodrama' *Erwartung* of 1909 (which the B.B.C. gave us an opportunity of hearing in January, for the first time for many years) contains the type of orchestral writing which Berg used so successfully for dramatic emphasis in *Wozzeck*, even down to some actual similarities—for instance, the ending of *Erwartung* clearly foreshadows the effect of the ripples spreading across the pool which appears in the orchestra at the moment of Wozzeck's death. It was a new type of writing, in the sense that it was no longer based on the formal symmetry and balance of periods which was characteristic of all music up to the end of the nineteenth century; Schoenberg had suspended tonality in his works from 1908 onwards, and in this new world of sound there was no longer any need of sequences, or of phrases which answered each other in more or less exact repetition—in fact it was better to avoid them, as they tended to become laboured. One has only to compare the working up to the climax of the *Liebestod* in *Tristan*, with its endless repetition of the same phrase, and the music at the end of the first act of *Wozzeck*, when the Drum-Major whisks Marie off and seduces her, to see the difference. Berg makes his points by brief dramatic strokes, always unexpected and never repeated in the same form; the mood changes abruptly from one moment to another. At first one may be disconcerted, and feel the constant shifting of idea to give a restless effect; but once the ear has become accustomed to the style, one can feel that this endless variety is dramatically right as an accompaniment to the action, and that words and music are fused together into a single dramatic whole. In fact, one watches the stage, listens to the words of the singers, and forgets the music as a separate entity—which is what Berg intended that we should do.

As a matter of fact, the music is extremely ingeniously constructed, and much has been made of the fugues, *passacaglias*, inventions, etc., which form the basis of it. I can only say that it is more or less impossible, and in any case quite unnecessary to attempt to disentangle these when watching a performance. Berg intended them to have a subsconcious effect on the listener, which they certainly have; his mind also delighted in making ingenious constructions for their own sake, always providing that they were purely subordinate to the musical expression. And in this he was entirely successful; no one would know, without having been previously told, that the scene between Wozzeck and the Doctor in the first act is a *passacaglia* based on a twelve-note theme, and even if he did know, he would find difficulty in following its construction in performance; yet the whole scene rises to an inevitable climax in just the same way as the great *passacaglias* of Bach and Brahms. Berg was an essentially instinctive and original genius; what he learned from his master Schoenberg, he used in his own way, and perhaps because his mind was naturally a less architectural one than Schoenberg's, he used these devices in order to make sure that the music would have a strong formal as well as emotional continuity.

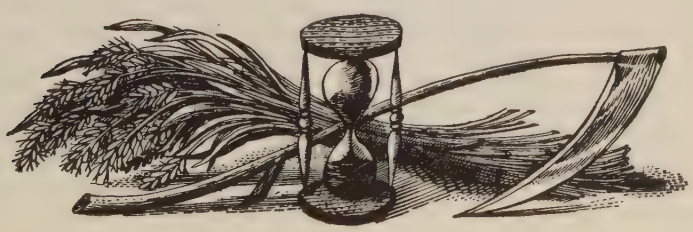
Contrary to the statements of some critics, *Wozzeck* does not use twelve-note methods of composition—this method was in fact not discovered by Schoenberg until two years after *Wozzeck* was completed—and even the twelve-note theme mentioned above is not handled according to the methods of the twelve-note technique. A good deal of the music is 'atonal' in the sense that Schoenberg's works between

1908 and 1923 were atonal, while in a good many passages there is very definite tonal feeling—apart from the famous interlude before the last scene, which is definitely described as 'Invention on a tonality'. Berg, in fact, used whatever type of writing was necessary for the dramatic expression of the moment, and his range is enormous—from the tenderness of Marie's lullaby for her child to the grotesque humour of the café scene and the wild rage and jealousy of Wozzeck, to give only three examples. The work is a masterpiece of our time, and its overwhelming emotional effect finds no parallel elsewhere.

Covent Garden must certainly be congratulated on giving the opera a production worthy of its greatness, especially when one considers the incredible difficulties that have to be overcome by singers, orchestra, conductor, producer, designer and scene-shifters alike. The production by Sumner Austin was workmanlike and effective; the *décor* by Caspar Neher, while exuding a slight flavour of the German films of the twenties, made the atmosphere of the barracks and its camp-followers' dwellings convincingly realistic without over-emphasising their sordid side. The Wozzeck of Marko Rothmüller gave a clear impression of a stupid but good man who could not see where events would lead him; he sang excellently, and got most of his words across to the audience. The latter could not be said of Christel Goltz as Marie, for she was clearly handicapped by having to sing the part in English; her singing in itself was admirable and though she certainly made the character too much of a slut, she was first-class in the more tender as well as the more emotional passages. Parry Jones and Frederick Dalberg as the Captain and the Doctor made a suitably absurd and fantastic pair; the former's diction was especially lucid. Thorsteinn Hannesson looked the part of the swaggering Drum-Major well enough, but in his struggle with Wozzeck in the barrack-room scene he did not show the real virility which the part demands. The English translation of Vida Harford and Eric Blackall was serviceable, and gave at any rate an adequate idea of the original; and certainly no purpose would have been served by giving the opera in German in this country, for the dialogue is mainly extremely realistic.

Above all, Covent Garden was fortunate in having as conductor Dr. Erich Kleiber, the conductor at the first performance in 1925; his complete command of the work radiated confidence, and as a result the difficulties of both singers and players were immeasurably lessened. The whole production was a triumph for Covent Garden, and we must hope that it will long remain in the repertoire.

Mr. Searle, the distinguished young twelve-tone composer, was a pupil of Anton Webern. His principal works are settings for Dr. Edith Sitwell's *Gold Coast Customs* and for *The River Runs* (passages from *Finnegans Wake*), and he is now working on a setting for Dr. Edith Sitwell's *The Shadow of Cain*. His *Poem for Twenty-Two Strings* will be performed at the Salzburg Festival next June



A WALK BEFORE DINNER

GIORGIO BASSANI

Signor Bassani, who was born in Bologna in 1916 but lived in Ferrara till 1943, is now Associate Editor of Botteghe Oscure, *in which this story, under the title* Una Passeggiata Prima di Cena, *first appeared*

Translated by Gwyn Morris

EVEN today, if you are prepared to browse in some of the small obscure shops in F., it is not difficult to come across picture postcards of at least fifty years ago: time-yellowed, damp-spotted views of the time. In one of these, we may see Corso Po, the main thoroughfare of the town as it was towards the end of the last century. To take it, the photographer must have stationed himself on the pavement opposite the long-vanished Gran Caffè Zampori with its string of tables and wicker chairs sheltering beneath voluminous fringed awnings flapping in the breeze. From the shade on the right of the photograph, rather like theatre-wings, looms a buttress of the Teatro Comunale, while the left of the picture is suffused with light—the golden glow of a spring twilight. Here the buildings are low, single-storeyed, and roofed with large brown tiles—a few small shops, a pork butcher, a coalman's cellar, a horse-meat shop—miserable hovels ruthlessly demolished in 1930, when it was decided to erect a marble palace for the General Insurance Company. At a guess, the window-frames in the picture were probably a faded, dreary green.

Corso Po, too—I mean the street itself, which, like a wide foreshortened river, occupies the centre of the card—was very different from what it is today. The present road surface is first-class, comparable to that of a large city. As it is now, Corso Po is a long, impressive thoroughfare reflecting a little of the sky's hue, along its broad, clean length. Long gone is all trace of the old tramlines, or of the white stone pathways used by carriage and bicycle alike.

Who knows what happened to the iron in those tramlines? Swallowed up, perhaps, by the last war. As for the carriageways which flanked the tram tracks, they were dumped in a meadow below the ramparts some years ago, and very soon they were covered with moss.

The card, we have said, is a reproduction of a photograph. But it is something more than a mere view of Corso Po towards the end of the nineteenth century. Admittedly, you are struck at first with the great stone-strewn carriageway, as uneven as the bed of a torrent. Incidentally, perhaps, that is the reason why our 'main street', on the card, seems more crowded and animated than nowadays. But that same picture is an impression of life along the entire length of the Corso in that split second when the photographer pressed the trigger—from the Caffè Zamponi corner, a few feet from the camera on the right, away down to where the sun throws into relief the eighteenth-century 'Prospect'—and beyond—the tail-end of Corso Po dwindling to a green-margined lane below the city walls. The picture is crowded with detail, of course, only in the foreground; a barber's boy stands at the shop door, picking his teeth; a dog sniffs the pavement (probably stained with dried blood) outside the horse-meat shop; a schoolboy hurries over the crossroads; a middle-aged gentleman in bowler hat and frock-coat pushes aside the awning at the entrance to the café; a magnificent four-in-hand (belonging perhaps to the Duke Costabili, recently come to reside in the neighbourhood from Rome) approaches at a trot, before tackling the so-called Castle Rise behind the photographer; and as the eye looks further along Corso Po, both people and objects become more indistinct and are bathed in a kind of luminous mist.

In short, a street scene which evokes life as it was then, and of which there remains barely a memory. On that May evening at the end of the last century, just as the photographer took the picture (but, of course, well out of range), the insignificant figure of a young girl about twenty was hurrying along the left-hand pavement of Corso Po towards the misty outskirts of the town, that is to say, in the opposite direction to that taken by Duke Costabili's *équipage*.

It was just that time of day before dinner—a delicious moment, when the air freshens and the nerves can relax—when from time immemorial townspeople of all conditions habitually abandon home or office and stroll up and down the broad pavements of the Corso, until the gas-lamps are lit. Among so many different passers-by, it seems likely that even if our young lady had been observed by a less impersonal eye than that of a photographic lens, she would none the less have been hard put to it to create an impression. Nothing in her appearance was particularly striking or could be classed as more than just ordinary. She was not a beauty to attract attention in a fashionable street at its busiest—nor one of those young women who can command appraising glances from passers-by, for various reasons—studied elegance in dress or hair-style or a majestically languid gait. This young woman was not at all like that. In a group photograph her face was not one to attract attention: even if noticed, it was quickly forgotten. This same impression she had of herself in a souvenir photograph of a group of white-coated doctors and grey-uniformed nurses, which she now clutched tightly in a brown-paper envelope as she hurried home.

The face of the young nurse, Gemma Brondi—that was her name, a common one in F., and the surrounding district—was, like a great many others, neither beautiful nor ugly. What made it seem even more plain and ordinary—if that were possible—was the fact that at that time girls of her class were not allowed to use rouge, lipstick or powder—those little refinements which, nowadays, any nurse from our modern District 'Superhospital', built between '20 and '30 at the end of Corso Po, invariably applies, sometimes quite tastefully, after duty and in preparation for a night out.

Gemma Brondi's chestnut hair, gathered in a large bun at the nape of the neck, was swept back off the forehead. It was a bulging, over-emphasised forehead—a peasant's strong, bony forehead, contrasting not unpleasantly with her delicate mouth. Her eyes, which matched her

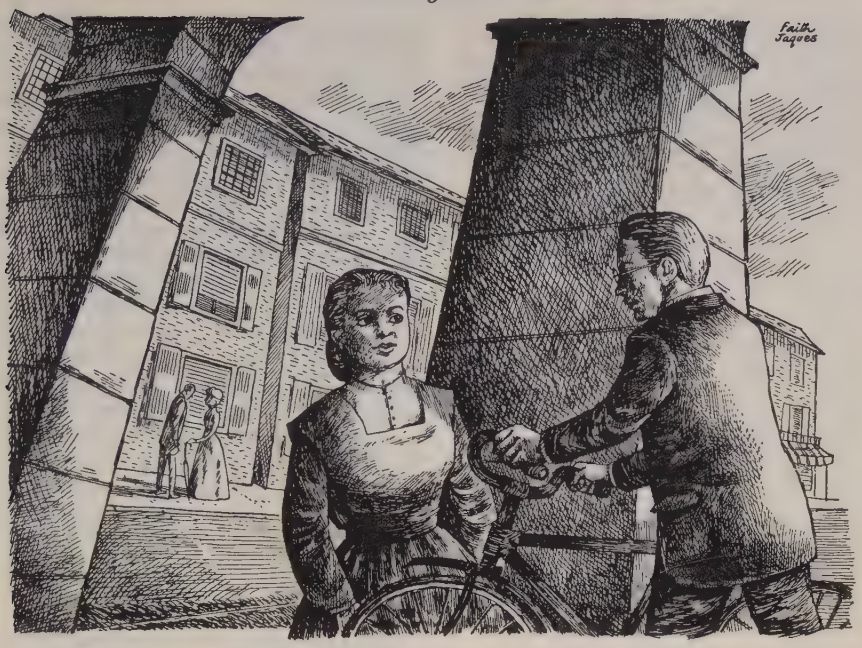
hair, shone at times with the lustre of youth, but usually they were frightened and melancholy with the patient and gentle expression so often found in pets' eyes. Not even her grey uniform, a sort of coarse apron, afforded her the protection or the effacement she desired, since it was tight at the waist and so served only to emphasise her amply-proportioned bosom. As she followed the low dividing wall, skirting on the left the far end of Corso Po, her erratic pace, varying from leisurely to hurried, betrayed a certain self-consciousness. She seemed to be vaguely ashamed, embarrassed by her own stocky well-developed body with its delicately tapered neck encircled by a narrow black velvet ribbon. Indeed, what could have been the thoughts of a girl like Gemma Brondi, probationer at the F. District Hospital at that particular moment more than half a century ago? Perhaps 'thoughts' is too precise a term for the vague, sub-conscious sensations in her mind. In any case, whereas the former appearance of Corso Po has been faithfully recorded on a simple postcard, of those impressions on the mind of Gemma Brondi, there remains no trace. And yet, spare a moment to study that view of Corso Po. Sense the general effect of gaiety and hope in the joyful fluttering of the awnings outside the Caffè Zampori, even in the sombre buttress of the Teatro Comunale, which, seen from the parapet girdling the Castle Moat, resembles the prow of a vessel, exultantly cleaving a path towards a future freedom. Observe all this, and you cannot help feeling that something of the day-dreams of a twenty-year-old girl, on her way home from work, *has* remained impressed on the picture, even though she does not appear in it.

But what of the hospital where she worked? Immediately after the unification of Italy, the District Hospital had found temporary but inadequate accommodation in what, at one time, had been a monastery—that's it, there—an old, ramshackle building which had to be renovated and enlarged—its long, low, brown façade, dotted with small windows, vulgarly spoils the noble sweep of Corso Po as it curves into the centre of the town. After a day spent in the gloomy wards of the hospital, Gemma Brondi, quite understandably, derived a certain sensual satisfaction from imagining herself the centre of a little world all her own—a modest world, but no less wonderful in her imagination than that through which the Duchess Costabili had just passed in her coach, attracting admiring glances fom every passer-by.

The picture posters proclaiming the coming attractions—St. George's Fair, and even sooner, *La Traviata* at the Tosi-Borghi Theatre (she was going to both with her sister Cesira)—seemed to be transformed into a resplendent background, rather like a sympathetic stage setting, expressly for her in her blue and white frock, the one which made her appear slimmer. They were the usual pictures with which she had been familiar from earliest childhood. And yet, that particular year, they held a special significance, a new attraction. Why? But, of course, Gemma Brondi would never have dreamt of asking herself such a question. Particularly at that time, she was a very simple girl, like almost all the girls of her age and class. So it was that, reaching the Prospect, out of sheer habit she looked up at the three pink arches through which she had to pass, and then she heard someone whisper in her ear, 'Good evening, Miss' —or something of the sort. She was taken unawares, blushed and paled in turns, and stared wildly around for a way of escape.

'Good evening, Miss'—came the murmur—'May I accompany you?'

Or words to that effect. For neither Gemma Brondi, nor the person who spoke, could have told exactly what they were. And who, besides the two young people, could have *caught* them—not to speak of *remembering* them? Just at that moment, the bells of the nearby Church of St. Andrew began to peal; to the photographer on the pavement at the other end of the Corso, stooping to pack up his camera and tripod, the sound of the bells on the cool evening air seemed a muffled signal that at least for that day his work was done. Back at the Prospect, while the ruddy-tinged brick gradually faded and cooled over their heads, the stranger engaged Gemma Brondi in conversation, all the



time avoiding the piercing gaze of her jet-black eyes. He was a painfully thin-faced young man of perhaps about thirty, with gold-rimmed glasses and a drooping moustache to match the colour of his eyes. Dressed in a dark suit, he stood with both hands grasping the handle-bars of a heavy 'Triumph' bicycle.

But now let us go on ahead of the two as they move off homewards, he pushing his bicycle.

Not far along the road is a squat two-storeyed dwelling, the home for generations of the Brondi family, peasants who left the country for the town. A sort of farm-house, it stands behind the fortifications, on the other side of the dusty lane which, winding the length of the town walls, turns sharply at right-angles fifty yards before the Prospect and becomes Corso Po. It is almost night-fall. In the ground-floor rooms which, overshadowed by the grassy escarpment of the fortifications, admit light only through the rear windows facing the long kitchen-garden, they have just lit the gas.

II

The first member of the family to notice Doctor Corcos, Doctor Elia Corcos, was Cesira, Gemma's sister—perhaps from that very evening. Usually, she would lay the round table in the big room, then go to the kitchen, and, to boil the pots, light the stoves which her mother had filled with charcoal and sticks. Her father and brothers had been working till dark in the garden, and now, as they prepared to come in, she could hear their voices more distinctly. It was then that Cesira would disappear upstairs, and not come down again until the others had finished their soup. Sometimes her mother would sigh—'Wherever does that blessed girl go?'

And then she would smile with weary indulgence at a picture of Cesira leaning with arms folded on the sill of one of the windows facing the fortress (actually it was the window of the bedroom that Gemma shared with her elder sister). And in the gathering gloom, the picture seemed to respond with a roguish, knowing smile. Meanwhile, old Brondi and the three boys, bent over their bowls, ate heartily. Cesira's disappearance at meal-time was one of those little privileges she claimed as her right (which the entire family accepted) to be considered, despite her thirty years, rather like the 'baby' of the family.

On the evening in question, Gemma and

Doctor Corcos arrived outside the house, and, as if scenting danger, abruptly parted company. The doctor, straddling his bicycle, pedalled away back along the lane, and soon disappeared round the bend, while Gemma slipped quickly into the house. Cesira had just then come downstairs, lightly and noiselessly as a wraith, and was standing at the door of the dining-room. If Gemma had not gone in immediately behind her sister, not even her mother would have bothered to look up. But, from that evening, Letizia regarded Cesira's appearance at the door as a signal, and she would seek confirmation with an inquiring glance towards her daughter in the dark shadows of the room. Both women were tall, fair and delicate. But it was not only a physical affinity which established a bond between them. Now across shadow and light they exchanged a smile of understanding such as they had hitherto shared merely in their imagination—a smile which faded as Gemma made her agitated entrance.

It was some little time before mention was made of it—a few days later, when, as usual before the evening meal, Cesira and her mother were on their way to Benediction at the nearby Church of Saint Andrew. The path from the farmyard to the low green door set in the churchyard wall (you turned to the right in Via Pergolato, and there you were in church) was only wide enough for one person to pass at a time. An excellent opportunity for exchanging confessions and confidences. Frightened snatches of conversation, as they hurried along without even glancing at one another, details of how Doctor Corcos looked (Cesira had already noticed his deathly-pale face with the black moustache drooping round a carefully-shaven chin—'A real gentleman'—she sniggered). It was to gain fresh information that the girl was allowed to go home before the end of the service. Her eyes fixed on the altar, Letizia sensed her daughter rising, heard the sound of a wicker chair being slightly moved aside. Cesira would tell her of her new discoveries the next evening, not before. And, thinking of Cesira at home, she lingered in the porch, chatting to the neighbours rather longer than necessary. Then, an interruption. A man's voice shouting in the distance—'Well—do we eat?' Almost rudely hurried goodbyes, and Letizia arriving in the kitchen, breathless, her heart pounding, and yet with the hostile, uncommunicative face of the mistress of the house, the *arzdora*[1] determined to defend her rights. She and Cesira only went out in the evening—a devout excursion to end the day. After all, the church was virtually on their doorstep. So who would dare to object? The soup was ladled out in sepulchral silence. Old Brondi and the boys were far too anxious to avoid squabbles during the meal and get away to their bowls match at the inn beyond Porta San Giorgio where they were regular customers from spring to autumn. Spring was yielding slowly to summer. Black against the sky, bats wheeled madly round the brown vaulted roof of the church of St. Andrew, their shrill cries increasing in intensity.

As time passed, Cesira added further imaginative details to the description of Doctor Corcos—a magnificent blue swallow-tail coat, gold-rimmed spectacles, and a gold watch, too, which on one occasion, when he was bidding goodbye to Gemma, he took from his waistcoat pocket—and then, a white silk tie, an ivory knobbed walking-stick—and, quite an air about him—yes, quite an air. Sometimes the pair would suddenly appear up among the trees and Cesira would hastily withdraw from her observation post at the window. Then she would ask herself furiously—Where have they been? Where have they come from? Perhaps till then they had been lying in the tall grass kissing in tight embrace. Another evening, before taking his leave, he raised his hat, bowed formally, and—so she thought—even kissed her hand. And as she came to this part of her report, the tone of her voice betrayed two conflicting emotions—rapture and indignation. She added smilingly: —But surely Gemma realises the risk she is running. Surely she must be aware that a gentleman like that . . . But, a moment, who was he, and what was his name? Unfortunately, we have no portrait of Doctor Corcos at the age of thirty. During her lifetime Signora Gemma Corcos kept

[1] This is an Emilian dialectal word meaning 'mistress of the house'

the only one in her jewel-case. It was the group photograph (only the doctor's head was visible), which as a girl she had brought home from the hospital and later hidden in her linen-chest on a spring evening in 1888. Many years after her death, quite recently, in fact, came the official announcement of the assumed death of Prof. Corcos, and his only son and heir, Dr. Jacopo Corcos. Shortly afterwards, the jewel-box, together with a lot of Gemma's effects, was sold to an antique shop in Via Coperta. Of course, the photograph went with it. So it may still be possible to find it in some dusty old piece of furniture. Mind, you'll have to deal with the antiquarian, an irascible old maniac who, if you show interest in any particular piece, immediately suspects that you are trying to cheat him out of an obscure rarity or a forgotten *chef-d'oeuvre* for a few centesimi. But once in possession of the photograph, it would be useful to study the young man's pale, lean, hungry face—the face of a student who remembered his University career in B. as years of hard work, privation, perhaps even humiliation. Imagine how it struck Cesira and Letizia—their amazement when they saw for themselves how he really looked. What a difference from the image they had conjured up in their imagination! 'Just an ordinary little doctor from the hospital, perhaps still a student'—they thought, disappointed and annoyed. The affair must be stopped and the other members of the family informed. If Gemma would not speak, then *they* would have to: even if, once her relations with 'that fellow' were revealed, she would have to be forbidden to go out to work by her brothers and her father (oh, yes, the old man would have something to say about it, to be sure). To prevent a scandal the family would cheerfully sacrifice the little that Gemma earned at the hospital. But between thought and deed, intention and realisation, there was the usual gulf. For the two 'conspirators' always calmed down during the short walk back from the church. On the evening in question, Cesira came home, hurried upstairs, carefully replaced the photograph in the chest of drawers, and then took up her usual position at the window.

Just as in some novels the most unforeseen circumstances eventually seem inevitable, so that night, reality was destined to rob Cesira of her pleasure in spying and telling tales, in supposing and deducing—those intimate delights which the imagination, despite all their plans for severe action, fondled with timeless indulgence.

The two lovers were coming along the lane and seemed not to notice that they had reached the point where usually they looked up at the window from which Cesira was watching and regularly parted company. Gemma was walking at a little distance from the doctor. The bicycle which he was pushing as he kept pace with her was between the two, and as usual he had both hands on the handlebars. They approached in silence, and this, too, was quite usual. But something in the stiffness of their gait, in the way they kept their eyes fixed on the ground seemed to endow their silence with an extraordinary significance. 'Lord, what can have happened?' breathed Cesira, pressing her hand to her heart. Then as they drew nearer still, Cesira had the impression that her sister's face was streaked with tears.

Now they had stopped beneath the window and in front of the door. What would they do now? Why did they keep on looking into each other's eyes, without uttering a word, and still standing on either side of the bicycle? (These were the questions which came to Cesira's mind at that moment as she crouched behind the blind, murmuring to herself. And that is exactly how we shall find her through the long years of her life, every time that we happen to look up at a window behind which stands the dim figure of an old maid, who with every passing year becomes more withered and apprehensive.)

And then, as if in response to her inward doubts, Dr. Corcos turned and swiftly crossed the road. For a moment he bent over his bicycle as he carefully rested it against the bank—he had always been very formal and methodical. Then he straightened up ('Heavens, what now?') and slowly retraced his steps. Gemma had not moved. She was waiting for him, leaning against the door post. There was a rapid gesture from Corcos. It seemed to

Cesira as if he was brushing his moustache. They kissed lingeringly. At length Dr. Corcos (some time must have elapsed, by now it was pitch dark and his movements could hardly be distinguished) went across to pick up his bicycle and followed Gemma into the house.

III

The conversation, if one could call it such, for he was the only one to speak for quite a time, flagged right from the first. It was inevitable. Who was he, and what was his name? He immediately gave his Christian name, surname, and his father's name, his profession, even his address, and he was quick to notice the feeling of bewilderment and embarrassment in the old gardener, in Gemma's brothers, in other words, in the men of the house, who until then had been completely unaware of his existence. The women, too, were more than a little confused because, as we have seen, their knowledge of the visitor had been so vague, and in certain respects quite fanciful. Corcos was sitting between Cesira and Letizia, and opposite the head of the family who, as the stranger entered, had looked up from his game of solitaire and stared at him with his mouth agape. Every now and then, regularly in turn, the doctor looked at each of the two women with pointed respect tinged with a certain ironic gallantry which indirectly suggested the different sort of world to which he belonged. The details he gave of himself amounted to the sort of information that one supplies for the purposes of a census, and if it had not been for the guest's exceptional charm and the general feeling of tension in the air, they might have seemed boring, pedantic and exaggeratedly fastidious.

(To be continued)

MANDALAY PALACE

It is related that when the Palace at Mandalay was built, between 1857 and 1860, a custom formerly widespread was followed, and the foundations were set upon a living body

Four corners to my bed,
root and stem and flower red.
By root swelled to flower guarded,
the four corners of my bed.

Radiate beyond the eye,
channelling to mastery,
the charged roots of Mandalay
hold the spoiling hands away.

Ma Myin laughing goes,
petal-bright, and in nothing shows
she, like her many sisters knows
the double entry to the rose.

Passes through my dreams a quiver,
sign, said one astrologer,
—the trampled mud his sepulchre—,
that the roots shake as they stir.

Four corners to my bed,
root and stem and flower red.
By root swelled to flower guarded,
the four corners of my bed.

W. A. B. GARDENER

OFF THE SAND ROAD

RUSSELL KIRK

THE old road had slouched through a cedar swamp, where mosquitoes hovered thick as fog over pools almost level with the track; but now the doctor and the two Bass boys came out upon a barren, fringed by silent woods. Ragged stumps, patches of brown rot contrasting with their naked grey sides, stretched for a mile across rolling country, and then scrub oak and second-growth pine closed the view. This land, nothing but sand held down by desperate clumps of grass, was unfenced, though a lop-sided sign proclaimed 'No Traspesing'. Under the July sun the scrawled sign was fading toward obliteration; the only other mark of possession was a roofless log cabin, and a side trail, fainter even than the old road, showed no mark of wheels. 'They're thick in here, Doctor,' said Harry, the older Bass boy; and the three of them, swinging their pails, turned down the side trail toward a cluster of wild strawberry plants.

Sand flowed from the forlorn ruts into their shoes; sometimes they sank in it nearly to their ankles. The doctor, on vacation from Chicago, ate nearly as many of the small berries as he dropped into his pail, but the Bass boys—Frank, nine years old, and his brother, fourteen—picked swiftly and earnestly, being native to the county: obtaining a tolerable livelihood in Pottawattomie County required frugality and diligence. The sun burned the doctor's urban neck, deer-flies plagued him as they approached the woods, and he longed for a drink in this cut-over desert. Harry and Frank picked on, though, so that presently they three worked near to the northern side of the barren. And now the doctor noticed a farmstead tucked into a hollow around a bend of the sand road:

little house, shed, and shingled barn, all so weathered that they seemed as much a part of the ravaged barren as the stumps which hemmed them in. Straightening, 'Whose place is that, boys?' the doctor asked, by way of diversion.

'That's where Mr. Slatry lived, Doctor Cross,' said Frank, in the conspicuously proper English the consolidated school instilled into country children these days. 'Want to see it?'

'Is the house empty?' The doors, he could make out, were shut, and there was glass in the windows, and the place looked more nearly habitable than some of the tar-paper shacks of the sand-hill farmers he had seen earlier in the week. A high-pitched roof shadowed walls of what seemed to be either stone or some sort of concrete block, although the bulk of a lonely giant sycamore kept the doctor from a clear view.

'Nobody's stayed there since Mrs. Slatry went away two summers ago,' Frank answered in his eager little voice. 'The man that owns it lives in Detroit now, and he can't get anybody to rent. It's bad land, anyway. We can make a short cut across the field.'

'Is this a field?' The doctor muttered it mostly to himself. It was bad land, indeed. Indian paint-brush, sweet fern, and milkweed brushed the doctor's ankles, and the dirt was lucky to support even these plants: for where vegetation was gone altogether, the wind and the spring rains created little Saharas, some of them fifty to a hundred yards wide, miniature dunes and troughs of a coarse yellow sand which stirred and shifted, even on so quiet a day as this, like sleepy animate terrors. 'What could they raise?'

'Corn,' said Harry, moderately proud of his intimacy with the economy of Potawattomie, 'and beans and potatoes. Anyway, they tried. Only two families ever lived here. John Williams was the first. He was a coloured man, and he put up this house a long time past. But things went wrong. Dad says some folks can raise corn in this blow-sand, and some can't. John Williams had a chance, because nobody ever ploughed this ground before, but there wasn't much rain for three years, and then not much hot weather, and another time his horses got sick. His folks went away to stay with relatives. Borers got into the corn. One night John Williams ate Paris Green.'

'Paris Green!' said the doctor. 'Why that?'

'I guess maybe he didn't have a gun, and of course he had Paris Green around to fight the potato-bugs. Nobody blamed him. He's buried by the cannon-ball monument in the cemetery. Afterwards there was a tax-sale, and a man bought the place for sixty-eight dollars. But he wasn't ever able to rent it until Mr. Slatry came.' Harry was expertly dismembering a grasshopper he had caught, manifesting the inoffensive savagery of boys on easy terms with nature.

'Ma never let us go here before, Doctor,' Frank interjected. 'But I don't think she'll mind with you along. Nothing's going to get us if you're around. She said she'd tan us if we fussed with that old well.' He nodded toward the steel windmill, now very close.

'That looks like a new derrick,' remarked the doctor. The metal glistened repulsively against the sombre tones of the barren.

'The man in Detroit had it put up when Mr. Slatry promised to stay,' Harry commented. 'I bet he's sorry now. Dad says Mr. Slatry couldn't have really meant to farm the place; probably he figured he'd get along on a garden and jobs in town. The Slatrys didn't have a Ford or anything, so Mr. Slatry walked in every day, when there was work. He didn't get much. He couldn't lift heavy stuff, because he was hurt in the war. He was almost forty, but he'd been in the Pacific fighting for years and had medals. Maybe they'd have got along on his pension, all the same, if Mrs. Slatry hadn't had all those kids.'

The house was built of a curious home-made mortar block, the doctor could tell now, though the barn and shed were log. At the two front windows, dingy yellow shades were pulled part way down. Many houses have the faces of animals, and this one seemed to whine like a stupid old dog. Cheap and rusty, a padlock secured the door. 'Let's try the side, Doctor,' Frank shrilled, trotting round to the slanting cellar door. Harry pulled it open, and the

dank smell of bare earth drifted up; they descended the few steps. Some sacks of fertiliser, a hoe, a snapped saw, mason jars—these and a mess of trifles littered the place. No stair led from the cellar to the house above, so they withdrew to the daylight.

'Didn't they take anything with them?' The doctor was gingerly climbing the rickety back stoop.

'Oh, Mrs. Slatry had funny ways,' Harry said. 'When she got a mood on, she wouldn't stop for hell or high water.' Frank chuckled.

'I don't like to poke around, boys, without . . .' But as he spoke, the back door yielded sulkily to his pressure, and they were in a rough kitchen swarming with flies. Torn papers, smashed food-jars, and the amorphous filth which always finds its way to the floors of gutted houses made entering a delicate process. The doctor picked his way past a wood-stove to open an inner door.

'The kids took after her,' observed Frank. 'They used to beat the dickens out of littler boys at school. They had white hair, Doctor, all five. They were fat, but Mr. Slatry was thin. Dad says they worried Mr. Slatry to a frazzle. They weren't his kids: Mrs. Slatry had them before she married Mr. Slatry.'

One bare-walled room and an alcove on the east side: this was all the lower floor of the house John Williams had built, except for the kitchen. The square room, with an unrailed staircase opposite the front door, was full of furniture; and the furniture was knocked topsy-turvy, much of it smashed—old straight chairs from second-hand stores and tawdry late-Victorian sofa and heavy table with its blue paint flaking. Someone, perhaps a gang of youngsters, had preceded them to the Slatry house. But the contents must have been nearly worthless. Movie magazines and confessions-pulps had been ripped apart and strewn everywhere. At the foot of the stairway, a bunch of evangelical tracts sprawled forlornly.

'Do you know who she is?' The doctor had picked up a snapshot which lay beside a battered Bible. A heavy woman in her middle thirties, not unhandsome, looked toward the boys—her eyes wide, her full lips held in an uncertain smile. As if she had moved nervously, her arm blurred the lower half of the photograph.

'That's Mrs. Slatry, Doctor. See the white building behind her? It's the Followers of God church. Mrs. Slatry used to walk to the main road and hitch-hike to the Followers of God meeting every Sunday, Ma says.' Frank manipulated a yo-yo he had found in an orange-crate. Well, thought the doctor, that explains the tracts by the stairs.

Presently, disregarding the bad list of the steps, the boys scrambled to the loft. 'Look at the letters, Doctor!' By the time the doctor had made his risky way up, Harry was tearing stamps off old envelopes for his album. A cardboard carton of correspondence, once tied with a blue ribbon which now trailed over broken bedsprings, had been hurled across the low room, spilling most of its contents; but the letters lay on the floor like a dropped deck of cards, and as the doctor idly picked them up, he found they were roughly in chronological order. In this loft, too, everything was battered and mutilated. He pushed aside a chest of drawers lacking its knobs, a child's hideous iron bed, a bushel basket of cheap dishes. Though this place was very hot, while the boys hunted their stamps, the doctor shuffled the bunch of letters.

She wrote a hand legible enough, this Mrs. Ella Slatry, and orthographical blunders were infrequent. Here was a letter in red ink, apparently the earliest of the lot; it protruded from a stained envelope addressed to a Corporal Gerald Slatry, at a San Francisco APO. 'What was Mr. Slatry's first name?' asked the doctor.

The boys conferred. 'Gerald, I guess,' Harry said. They were prying out the dresser drawers now. The doctor leaned against the bedsprings and read:

Dearest Jerry,

Tho't I would try and write you again tonight. You've been writing to me every *night, so I should write to you that often if possible. And, besides, I need someone kind and understanding to talk to!*

Hope you can read my writing all right. Ralph seemed to object to my using his typewriter, even tho' he told me I could use it

whenever I wanted to; so I got me some more stationery and some new penpoints and a bottle of ink tonight. I don't like red ink as well as I do green, but it is better than those terrible dark colours, and I couldn't get any green or violet.

My! I'm so sleepy and tired, Jerry, that I can scarcely see to write! I've got *to do it, tho', for* you. *The things you have to face over there must be terrible, but nevertheless I believe I'd rather be there, with you, than here. At least, I'd have somebody nice to talk to, and I'd just as soon have bombs and bullets coming at me, as some of the things that have been coming my way lately, Jerry. I sure have you to thank for those lovely letters you have written me. They are about the only pleasant things of any kind, that have come my way for the last month! In other words, they have been the only sweetness in my bitter cup!* I need your letters *as bad as you do mine! At a time when all my plans seemed to go wrong, and all my 'so called' friends failed me, somehow, the Lord in His mercy saw fit to give me a friend away across the ocean! Maybe it is best that way. If you are not a true friend I won't be so apt to find it out, at least not so soon.* Please, *Jerry, my friend, forgive me for feeling that way about it! But it has been proven to me, more than once, that the only* really true *'friend' that one has is* The Lord!

Last night I felt so very weary and tired of everything in this earthly life! I wish I had your shoulder to cry on (but maybe you wouldn't like that). Anyway, I'm sure it's best the way it is! I can cry it out, on my knees, and tell Him *all about it!*

Think I'll go to sleep now, if I can. Goodnight, Jerry.

Love,
Ella

Among the letters, the doctor noticed several postal money-order applications, completed but never submitted, drawn in favour of two firms of tract-publishers. Thrust among them were notations of tract-titles: 'Brooks in the Wilderness'; 'Sins Eradicated'. There was another blank with the name of a very different firm upon it, pinned to a coupon requesting a copy of 'Intelligent Sex Relations'. He found a second letter in red ink, written a week after the first; in this Ella recounted an interminable tale of tribulation—disobedient children, boredom, unending work about the house. She was living with relatives, it appeared—some cousin who was married to Slatry's sister Jane. Her former husband was paying her alimony to the amount of twenty-one dollars a month, which she was expected to contribute wholly to the household's expenses. She didn't think it was right. Here an interruption occurred: 'Maybe I can resume my writing again now, after having to go upstairs and use a belt on some very disobedient youngsters.' The sun hadn't shone for days. And Ralph and Jane expected her to do all the work. 'I hope and pray that the Lord will provide a way for me to get out of it before long!' She listened to John Wellam and his 'Nation Back to Faith' programme on the radio every Sunday. Did Jerry hear it overseas? She hoped so.'

The doctor recognised a querulousness very close to hysteria, recognised it quite as clearly as if the woman had stood before him. He glanced over the concluding sheet of the letter:

I wonder if Jane was right when she told me I was just 'wasting my time' writing to you? And when I said I was beginning to like you, she said I was 'riding for a fall'. Maybe I should take her advice and not only quit writing to you, but also refuse to read your letters!

I wonder why it is, that because of the circumstances brought on by past sins, and mistakes, that one must 'exclude' all *the sweetness in the present, and all 'hope' for any happiness in the* future? *Must one go on paying and paying until the end of time? You can thank God, Jerry, that you have been fortunate enough never to have got yourself mixed up in matrimony! You don't have to worry about a broken home and several little children plus a divorce!*

Well, I sent the children to Sunday school this morning, but I didn't go. I should have, I suppose, but the minister's wife over here in the church appears to be entirely lacking in Charity toward others. Seems to think she's 'perfect' and expects everyone else to be the same way. I don't mean to criticise, but she really gets under my skin.

Grimacing, the doctor dropped this

letter and leafed through an accumulation of bills, statements, and duns. 'Was Mr. Slatry good to the children?'

'He was a real nice, quiet man,' Frank answered from the middle of a pile of old clothes.

'He had to be good to them, or they'd of kicked him in the creek,' added Harry. 'They were some peelers. He was a lot better to them than Mrs. Slatry was. One day Jimmy Slatry came to school and there was a big red burn on his neck, and the teacher asked him how he got it. He said his Ma poured scalding water on him because he dropped his plate.'

But she wrote verse, it appeared. Indeed, there was a letter trying to sell lyrics to a music publisher—never mailed, like those money orders; and here was something she had sent to Gerald Slatry:

> *I wrote this the day after I wrote* A Gentleman Speaks His Mind, A Proposal. *It gave me the inspiration for the other one.*
>
> *If you and I lived all alone*
> *In this here place that we call home,*
> *I s'pose you'd keep me on the run,*
> *But sure, and we'd have lots of fun!*

Pinned to this effort was a clipping from an Ohio weekly: 'Married Friday, March 7, Ella Fowler and Gerald Slatry. Mr. Slatry's mother and two sisters and niece from Ulysses were present. Mr. Slatry, who spent four years with the Army in the South Pacific, was recently released from Bushnell General Hospital.'

'Did your folks know the Slatrys well?' the doctor inquired.

'Nobody saw much of Mr. and Mrs. Slatry,' Harry told him. 'It's too far out of the beaten track, this place. They weren't good mixers, anyway.'

'Some days nobody came by here at all,' Frank added. He dug up a soiled garrison cap from among the old clothes. 'About the only folks that use the sand road are the Whittakers, when they're walking and want to take a short cut. Or sometimes people come out this way to Loon Creek, where the fishing's so good the trout come on hoppers, except the brush has got awful high.'

'Look at the bills!' said Harry, as the doctor dropped half a handful of them to the plank floor. 'Ma says Mrs. Slatry used to come in the drugstore and buy Hollywood magazines by the armload, the kids tagging along behind her with dirty faces. Not that they had money. They ended up owing all the stores. Mrs. Slatry told people she just couldn't help herself when she got in a dime store—she had to bring home all the new things to try out. Mr. Slatry was different, but they say after a while he stopped arguing with her about buying junk, because he only got himself in dutch. She sure could fly off the handle. One day Pat Whittaker was walking along the road and he heard a yelling and there was Mrs. Slatry chasing Mr. Slatry round and round the barn with a rake, hitting him when she could. She was a big woman. Mr. Slatry took it; he didn't want to fight any more. Another time, some men from the city went past here toward Loon Creek, and later they asked Dad, "What goes on at that dump up the sand road? The woman was after the man with an axe, right out in the yard. He grabbed it away from her and threw it in the grass and dodged into the house, and she went right in after him".'

She had bought novelties by mail, too. The doctor came upon a bill for 'two live male hamsters and two live female hamsters, shipped by railway express.' An artificial-flowers-materials firm asked payment for 'covered wire, cloth lilies of the valley, wool fibre'. She had toyed with correspondence courses, one in 'artistic lettering'. And presently she had come to begging—at first by implication, later without hesitation. A well-known national charity wrote that her case was not within their jurisdiction. A couple in Colorado replied: *Sorry things are working so badly for you, but don't know what we can do.* Mrs. Slatry had better luck with a Grand Rapids woman, who sent a Christmas card: *I'm the one you met in the toy department, remember? I hope this small gift of money will help make a happier Christmas for you and your family.*

Frank had discovered some corporal's chevrons and was displaying them against his sleeve. 'Once she told Mrs. Collins,' he remarked, 'that she simply *had* to buy things to keep her mind off the sand on the ridge. The sand got into her frying-pan when she was cooking supper; it was always

coming through the window-sills and into the beds. And nobody ever came to talk to her. She thought everybody around here tried to be high and mighty.'

Growing impatient, the doctor threw most of the remaining letters into an empty box. One of them, however, seemed to be in an old man's hand, and he picked it up again. It was from the fellow in Detroit who had bought the place on tax-sale after John Williams took Paris Green:

Dear Mrs. Slatry,

I received your kind letter and was glad to hear from you. I am sending you the $30 toward the new cellar doors and the work on the barn and the rest you pay yourself. I aint charging you no rent until spring till I see what I am going to do. Let me know if you received the money right away. You say the plum trees are in blossom. Glad to hear you like them, it is a very quiet place and I think that sycamore is a very nice tree. There was two trees but when the other shed burnt down that one other tree burnt too. I guess when the Lord comes he will come like a thief in the night, nobody knows when that will be but it begins to look it won't be so long for his coming. I am getting tired of working in factories and when your beginning to get up in years you can't take it like a young person. It sure gets on your nerves. Too bad your husband did not try the pump before he went for the well man. I hope your husband is working steady and I wish you the best of luck. Let me know right away if you received the money. I must ring off with my best regards to both you.

Yours very Truly
William Rogerson

Apparently this communication had never been acknowledged by the Slatrys. It was followed by three more notes, of increasing anxiety, from old Rogerson, asking if the money had arrived. Nothing had been done, the doctor reflected, about the old cellar door and the sagging barn.

Only three or four more letters remained in the doctor's hand. He swore very softly in surprise at the next, from a Clifford Billings of Eugenia, Michigan. It was in ink; the capital letters had been encircled in red, as if Mrs. Slatry had sat musing over it; it was undated:

Mrs. Ella Slatry,

Dear Club member, I saw your ad. in the Joined Hands Club and thought I would like to know you. I am looking for a true and good woman, either not married or a widow. I have one little girl eight next month and she needs a good mother and I too need a nice Cook and mate. I am very active and healthy and therefore should have a nice Wife to love. My earnest Prayer is to find a nice true woman to love.

I am a Farmer and Berry grower, have a place that can be made to a nice Home with the help of a goood woman.

So if you are still looking for a nice fellow that is kind and true I would be glad to hear from you in the near future and would appreciate a Picture.

'I guess we've got everything we want, Doctor,' called out Frank, scrambling down the stairs with the chevrons and the garrison-cap. Harry had salvaged a shaving-mug and a jack-knife with one blade snapped. The doctor looked at the farmer's letter again, shrugged mentally, and followed the boys through the house and out at the back door, still carrying a couple of soiled letters. Mrs. Bass having packed sandwiches for the three of them, they sat on the sparse grass in the shade of the sycamore to have their lunch.

Biting an apple, the doctor glanced at one of the remaining pieces of paper—a dun from a jewellery shop. 'Dear Madam: We have on our books an account by the name of Gerald Slatry. It is in the amount of $47.53, for a gold wedding-ring with small diamond, purchased June 5, 1946. We understand Mr. Slatry is deceased. Can you advise as to what is being done by his estate on matters such as this?'

Dead? The doctor pulled the last letter from its envelope. A Mrs. Alonzo Slatry had sent it:

Ella,

I am writing to ask if you would give your consent to have Jerry's body taken up and laid to rest in the cemetery where nearly all our folks are buried. My father took up land from the government when Ohio was being settled and the farm has always been in our family. If you leave the place where you are now, there would be no one to put flowers on his grave. He never was a boy to hang around

home, so when he came back from the war and was married I was so happy thinking he would settle down and I could see him often.

While I was looking through some boxes I run across a letter he wrote in a foxhole and I set down and cried thinking how things had turned out; he was so young to die, and to think he believed I never wanted to see him again.

I hope you will forgive little Helen for talking the way she did, about your marrying Jerry. Children take things so hard.

Sincerely,
Alice Slatry
(Mrs. Alonzo Slatry)

The doctor put down his apple. 'Did Mr. Slatry die right here?'

'Yes,' said Harry, finishing his sandwich, 'but Mrs. Slatry stayed on for a month. She tried to go to some of the neighbours, but nobody wanted to take five kids, and besides she wasn't well liked. Some people were scared of her. After Mr. Slatry went, the Whittakers could hear her walloping the kids half a mile away. She was on edge. Toward the end of the month, she told people she was going to stay the summer and then go north and get married again. But one night the Whittakers heard her screaming, and Pat went over, and she screeched that somebody had been peeking in the windows and trying the doors. It's a lonesome house. Pat says she looked like something loose from the asylum. Next morning she walked into town with the kids, just carrying a suitcase, and they all took the bus, and nobody's heard from them since.'

'Mr. Slatry died *right* here,' declared Frank, reminiscently. He pointed to the nearest strong limb of the sycamore. 'Right there was where he hung himself.'

'Where he was hanging when the Whittakers found him, that is,' added Harry, in the superior tone of one entrusted with family gossip. 'There were lumps and bruises all over him, but probably Mrs. Slatry left marks on him most days, anyway. She'd gone after groceries when the Whittakers came along the road and saw Mr. Slatry hanging. People didn't like it, but Mr. Slatry hadn't any relatives around here, and he was buried without more said.'

'Look!' said Frank, putting on the garrison-cap and sucking in his cheeks. 'Look, I'm Mr. Slatry!'

A breeze, rustling the sycamore, picked a dozen grains of sand from beside the doctor's feet and deposited them on his shoes. A couple of martins alighted on a stump fence across the sand road; grasshoppers leaped in the sun; as the wind touched it, the barn door creaked heavily. Had it not been for the boys beside him, the doctor thought he would have run straight across the barren, in spite of the sand, until he gained cover in the cedar swamp.

PASSAGE TO WORSHIP

Those several times she cleaved my dark,
Silver and homeless, I from sleep
Rose up, and tried to touch or mark
That fabulous personage with deep
Unmotivated love. My days were full,
My halting days were full of rage,
Resisting in my heart the pull
Towards reverence and pilgrimage.
But now this blinding sheeted bird
Or goddess stood at my bed's head
And counselled in a single word
The journey of the steadfast dead.
What else could I have done but go?
Now I have gone and come to know.

DONALD HALL

ANOTHER DAY

JOHN SYMONDS

NEAR the British Museum is a street so narrow and overshadowed that one passes it hardly aware of its existence. On one side it has two, perhaps three, dwelling-houses, the doors of which open upon the pavement: the rest is the backs of store-rooms.

The walls are made of stone, not brick, and are blackened by decades of London dirt. Upon a window-sill the red flower of a geranium holds the imagination and sends the eye to the white lace curtains covering the dingy window.

In a room near the top of one of these houses lived a young man. This particular house was not very old, not much more than a hundred years, but it had missed that wonder of the age: Bunsen's gas burner. When it grew dark, a small oil lamp was lit in the hall instead.

He sat at a table and typed out an article he had written on whale-fishing—he had once gone on a whaler to the Arctic.

Suddenly there was a thunderous knock at the door. An old woman, dressed in black, with a pale, indignant face, wanted to know what all the noise was about.

'What noise?'

'It sounded like a roaring machine over my head. How can I sleep with that going on?'

'Oh, you mean my typing,' he said, catching on.

There was an embarrassed pause.

'Well it's not in the middle of the night, you know. I've got my work to do,' he pursued stoutly.

Then he stepped back with surprise. He knew he'd seen her somewhere before. She was the little old woman who begged outside the church, with a tray of matches in her lap and the legend round her neck:

DEAF AND NEARLY BLIND

He gave her a stare and she went off muttering something about complaining to the landlady. He closed his door, saying aloud:

'The old fraud!'

Two days later he saw her again, sprawled on the steps of the church round the corner, as if she would need assistance to get up, her eyes shaded by dark glasses.

The twin spirits of fun and mischief rose simultaneously in his breast. His fingers grasped a half-crown. He stepped close to

her. Her eyes, behind her dark spectacles, stared at him fiercely.

'Remember me?' he whispered, tapping with the coin on the side of her tin tray. 'Lovely day!' He quickly slipped the half-crown back into his pocket.

'Clear off, you!' She made a movement as if to strike him, and he skipped away.

That night he came into the lamp-lit hall, an apprehensive girl clinging to him. 'I'm up at the top,' he said.

He struck a match for her as he went up the narrow stairs; he lit another on the landing above, then a third higher up.

Suddenly the stairs and landing burst with light. The beggar woman had a large oil lamp on her table: it shone into the faces of the two lovers.

'Come on, Mary,' he said, stopping to cover her with his arm. The old woman's face was a study in hatred. Then her light was cut off as her door slammed.

'Deaf as a post!' he said angrily.

The following afternoon he began to hammer the keys of his typewriter like a professional typist on a rush job.

Suddenly he stopped, thinking he could hear someone mounting the stairs. No, she wasn't coming up. He continued furiously until the floor in this decayed house shook beneath him. Then he got up and went out, went into the British Museum library with a ghostly smile hovering about his cheeks.

Some hours later the 'Wheatsheaf' turned him out into the night street. He came home and climbed the dark stairs, his mind and body heavy with alcohol. He lit his lamp and sat down at the table. He was, as they say, in his cups. His typewriter caught his eye. Hardly aware of what he was doing, he began banging the keys. The machine slowly slid to the end of the table and fell with a crash and a ring of the bell to the floor.

Blast, that had done it! He'd ruined it. . .

He picked up the machine and disentangled the keys. Then there was another crash as it slipped from his drunken grasp on to the floor again.

He left it there and sat on the edge of the bed waiting for his neighbour to come up and lambast him.

Enough to waken the dead, let alone the deaf. Why didn't she come up? What was the matter with her?

He found himself stamping downstairs and then banging on the beggar woman's door, bawling: 'I'm sorry if I've disturbed you!'

There was no answer.

'Come out,' he called. 'I want to apologise.'

'What the devil's going on up there?' cried a rasping voice below. A lighted candle began to ascend the stairs. His landlady in her nightdress and overcoat appeared.

'She won't answer,' he said.

'Who? You're drunk!'

'That old fraud of a beggar woman.'

The landlady tapped on the door and leant her head against the panel. Not as much as a groan came from inside.

'That's odd,' she said. Then she turned the handle and walked in, holding the candle aloft. With a loose, questioning lip, he followed.

The light from the candle flickered along the walls. The room seemed empty. The blind had not been pulled. The bed was as flat as the floor.

'Why don't you leave me alone?' came a querulous voice from the arm-chair in the corner.

They were both startled; the landlady's extended hand shook, and grease ran down the candle. It was the old woman, roused from a deep sleep.

With muttered apologies, the intruders retreated, the landlady repeating: 'We thought you was ill, dear. So sorry.'

Outside, in the passage, they gave each other a stare.

'What's the matter with her?'

'I don't know,' he replied, absent-mindedly. The sight of the beggar woman's wrinkled face, with its malicious, gleaming eyes, peering up at him from the depths of the wicker arm-chair, had given him a nasty turn.

'What was she sitting in the dark for?'

'Dreaming,' he answered.

'Good night,' she said.

He replied inaudibly, and they went their ways.

His heart was pounding. He was quite sober now; it wasn't her face, the sight of her, that had done that. On the floor, half

under the bed, was an open case. Not very conspicuous. His landlady hadn't see it.

It was filled with coins, mainly two shilling pieces and half-crowns and bundles of dirty banknotes, some wrapped in newspaper. God, she'd a fortune in notes, hidden in her squalid room, in the mattress, in different boxes, behind the picture probably.

No one, besides herself, ever went into her room. She made her own bed, cleaned the room herself. Who would have thought she'd a bean? Poor old woman. He laughed grimly. 'The old fraud,' he muttered.

That night he fell asleep trying to reckon up how much she could have accumulated through a lifetime's begging and scrounging. Perhaps ten thousand pounds! He turned restlessly in the bed. Amazing! And what use was it to her? None at all! Now what couldn't *he* do with ten thousand pounds? Instead of counting sheep leaping stiles, he began to enumerate the things he could buy, and do, with ten thousand pounds.

Of course no one knows she has a bean, he said to himself two days later. Poor old beggar woman. When she dies, they'll find out, but not before. Say, if he could whip into her room a moment after she'd kicked the bucket . . . then no one would ever know.

He had to tell someone about it, so, in deepest secrecy, he told his girl friend. 'If I had that money, or even a part of it,' he said slowly, while she turned big, amazed eyes upon him. 'If I had that money . . . ' he reiterated slowly.

'What?' she said, her lower lip sucked in with concentration of thought.

'. . . we could get married,' he concluded.

'Oh,' she said, letting out her lip and a great breath of air. And she restrained herself from making any more definite comment than, 'That would be nice.'

She stroked the back of her head. 'Pity she won't leave it to you in her will,' she said, taking their thoughts into harmless channels.

He didn't reply. He was thinking of Dostoievsky's *Crime and Punishment*.

'Raskolnikov was a fool,' he said after a long pause.

'Who was?'

He didn't answer her question, but went on talking.

'Raskolnikov murdered the old woman for her money, and did in her sister at the same time. How daft.'

'What are you talking about?' said the girl by his side harshly.

She had fluffy blonde hair. The rouge on her lips was cracked and broken. An indeterminate air about her, a sense of dreaminess in her expression, indicated the life of phantasy. She was a somnolent cloud: he a stroke of forked lightning.

'Look,' he said tersely. 'He could easily have pinched her money without murdering her. He was a lunatic to take a chopper along in the first place. He bashed her with an axe,' he said by way of explanation. 'It was sheer butchery. The chap was mad.'

He'd argued it out with himself. He did not want to do *anyone* a scrap of harm. He shivered at the thought. He was no thief: never had been; never would be. He'd never pinched a thing in his life. Why, then, was he contemplating robbing this old woman? Well, was he? He was only thinking of taking a few of her toys. He could substitute bundles of plain paper for the banknotes: it would mean just the same to her. It was not as if she wanted to spend them.

As a boy he had robbed birds' nests, sometimes replacing the eggs with pebbles of about the same size. The bird never knew the difference. A bird couldn't think. Neither would the old woman know the difference. It was all wrapped in brown paper. She would be just as happy. And he would lay the foundation for a successful and distinguished life . . .

For two hours they talked, or rather he did most of the talking; she listened, intently and dreamily at the same time, thinking how happy she would be married to him.

Well, it is up to him, she kept on thinking. If the old girl wouldn't know, the old girl couldn't, therefore, mind. Being a miser, it was not as if she needed the money. She probably didn't know how much she had. Why, it was a disgraceful waste for her to have any money at all. As long as one didn't harm her in any way by taking it. Not like that Raskolnikov chap in the

Russian novel. She grimaced as she thought of him.

'How will you do it?' she said at last.

'You leave that to me,' he said, his mind made up.

The breath escaped from her lungs like air from a tyre. And she covered her eyes with her hand.

A plan was worked out in his mind, such a simple plan that it made him almost laugh. The beggar woman turned the key when she went out, but the lock in her door was only a simple, old-fashioned one.

He got on a bus and was carried into the suburbs. He mustn't enter the local ironmonger's, just in case. . . .

In the early afternoon he returned with keys of slightly different shapes and sizes, but all of the household type. As he passed the church, he saw her again, in her usual place, her eyes closed, inert, waiting for more gold to add to her hoard.

Quietly he mounted the stairway in the still house: everyone seemed to be out. A fat fly moved and buzzed. Stuffed into his pockets were wads of plain paper, cut to the exact size of pound notes. Raskolnikov's hand, he remembered, had trembled violently when he tried to fit the key into the pawnbroker's trunk.

The lock of her door yielded instantly. He removed the key and entered the room, locking the door behind him. He dragged the case out from under the bed. It was of plain fibre, a cheap suitcase for use on a cheap holiday. It was locked. Of course it was locked. Why hadn't he thought of that? Where did she keep her keys? Beads of sweat appeared unexpectedly on his brow. She took the key with her, of course. Forgetting about his plan of substituting paper for pound notes and hoping that she wouldn't discover the loss, he began picking the lock, but it obstinately refused to open. His eye caught her dressing-table. He pulled open the drawer and found to his relief a bunch of small keys.

A moment later the case lay open and he was up to his wrists in half-crowns and florins. He began to unwrap the newspaper that covered some of this treasure trove. He took a great wad of dirty pound notes from one of these packages, but instead of replacing it with his plain paper, in his excitement he put the notes back and stuffed his worthless substitutes into his trouser pockets. Then he spilt notes and plain paper on to the floor. He was losing his head. He must control himself.

Suddenly he started up in fear. Someone was outside, putting a key into the lock: she'd come back.

There was just time for him to dart behind the door.

Afterwards he wondered what, exactly, had happened. There had been a noise amid the silence, like a pin dropping on to a glass surface.

She had fallen over. Of course he hadn't heard a pin drop, but a piercing scream. Fear, perhaps, had blocked his ears.

The door swung on its hinges and slowly closed again. She'd fainted and was lying stretched out on the mat beside the bed.

Had anyone heard anything? He mustn't start running down the stairs now, he kept telling himself.

He stood for whole minutes in a trance, his foot touching the foot of the old woman lying on the floor. They were both extraordinarily still. Then, slowly, he began to feel cold, very cold.

He shivered and moved, shook himself, but the woman at his feet remained exactly in the same position.

How much longer he stood there looking at her still form, he didn't know; what agony he suffered he couldn't estimate. His hair might have turned white in those minutes, for he knew she was dead.

Before the dawn of the next day broke, three people came out of doors and hurried down the dark street: a woman with blonde, untidy hair, a man with a haggard face, and between them, tightly pressed, an old bent woman.

Quickly they ran on, so quickly that the feet of the old woman hardly seemed to touch the ground.

A workman, on his way, looked up and saw two people bent over a third who was sitting on the wide steps of a church. They seemed to be placing something like a tray of matches into her lap. Odd, he thought, hurrying on, for he was already late for work.

A Sketch from Dicky Doyle's Diary 1840

THE FORM OF THE FAUNA

A Study of Edwin Landseer

BERNARD DENVIR

IT is difficult to decide whether the English passion for animals is explicable in terms of anthropology, psychology or economics. Is it totemism, animalism, or bourgeois escapism? It is, at any rate, a unique national characteristic, which became manifest only with the advent of the romantic age, has always produced strong emotional reactions, and received its most prolific expression in the fine arts in the course of the nineteenth century.

Clearly there is a difference between the deer which adorn the caves of Lascaux and those which peered ingratiatingly from the walls of Burlington House at Victorian private-view audiences. But there must be a thread of continuity between them somewhere, and inevitably the question arises as to why we should so unreservedly praise the one, and so unsparingly condemn the other. Why does Lascaux evoke respect, and The *Monarch of The Glen* ironic mirth? Why, indeed, has the name of Edwin Landseer become a quick-fire formula for a high-brow joke—a cultural equivalent of Wigan Pier? Our rejection of Landseer, our refusal to accept the almost unanimous verdict of Victorian England may be no more than a reversal of ancestor-worship, or it may be a necessary and predetermined evolution in the history of taste. But it is still difficult to decide why he was so greatly admired even by those whose judgments we still respect, and it is almost impossible to disassociate from the judgment a strong emotional undercurrent which makes it difficult for us to see him merely as an artist, or to assess his achievement in simple stylistic or aesthetic terms.

Ruskin, of course, for all his distinction, and even despite the fact that it was the desire to read his works which led Marcel Proust to learn English, cannot be relied upon in the judgment of his contemporaries. His praise of *The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner* in *Modern Painters* is too fulsome to convince anyone. But Delacroix, one of the greatest painters of the century, and a man of great intellectual distinction, whose judgments were always balanced and coherent, admired Landseer's works, and saw in him—especially in relation to *Chevy Chase*, which has recently been on view at Burlington House, a communal derivation from Rubens. And in 1821 Géricault wrote from London to Horace Vernet: *Vous ne pouvez pas vous faire une idée des tableaux ici—les animaux peints par Ward et par Landseer, âgé de dix-huit ans . . . les maîtres n'ont rien produit de mieux en ce genre.*

Precocity is, of course, very often the enemy of final achievement, and when Géricault admired Landseer's works, the young artist was already an established figure in the London art world. The son of a painter and engraver, John Landseer, who engraved many of his works, young Edwin—the name is redolent of the mediaeval romanticism of Scott—had his first big success in the year of Waterloo, when he was thirteen. In that year he

sent to the Royal Academy a painting of a brown mastiff which was accepted at the annual exhibition, sold for sixty guineas, and attracted universal praise. Earlier studies of animals, done with even more alarming precocity, are still to be seen at the Victoria and Albert Museum. His earliest training had been received from his father, who was something of a martinet, and at one period he came under the influence of the unfortunate Haydon, who was teaching his two brothers, and who exhorted him to become 'the English Snyders', and recommended a close study of animal anatomy. To this latter precept Landseer paid an attention so close that even his most enthusiastic detractors cannot deny it. It was he, too, who brought Stubbs's famous drawings for *The Anatomy of the Horse*, and on his death bequeathed them to the Royal Academy.

In the same year as he exhibited at the Academy, he entered the schools of that institution, became intimate with C. R. Leslie, the biographer of Constable, and his own lifelong friend, and attracted the attention of that pocket-Michelangelo of romanticism, Fuseli. The effect of a regular art school training seems at first to have been unfortunate. Wilkie warned him against a 'niggling' style, and his execution seems to have become altogether too finicky. This, however, was only a phase, and had he persisted in it, he might have won the eventual approbation of Holman Hunt, who at one time thought of suggesting to him the idea for *The Scapegoat*, but on consideration decided 'I have a possibility of painting it worthily which he could never have.' The typical Landseer style is, in fact, marked by great breadth and freedom of execution. He could paint a life-size deer in three hours, draw with both hands at the same time, and, what is more commendable than either of these *tours de force*, achieve with the minimum of effort effects over which more 'sincere' artists laboured for weeks. Whilst Holman Hunt was painting sheeps' coats hair by hair, his less 'worthy' colleague was achieving the same result by the free application of a brush loaded with paint on an already laid-on solid background of colour.

Throughout his life Landseer was devoted to the Royal Academy, an institution to which he owed most of his success. It gave him his first publicity, educated him without cost (no fees are charged at the R.A. schools), introduced his works to the public, and afforded him the elements of a brisk social life. He became an Associate in 1826, a full member in 1831. Today, when the Royal Academy is looked upon either as a cultural fuddy-duddy, or a point of acute and publicised controversy, it is difficult to realise how completely it controlled English art life in the nineteenth century. Within the space of fifty years it had given the artist professional dignity, and raised him above the status of a journeyman. It had canalised patronage and stimulated interest in the fine arts to an almost unbelievable extent. In 1843, for instance, there was an exhibition at Westminster Hall of cartoons for the decoration of the new houses of Parliament. In the course of five weeks it was seen by half a million people, a far higher average attendance than at any modern exhibition.

Academicians had the right to be known

Dicky Doyle at the Royal Academy, 1840

How fine is Edwin Landseer's Laying down the Law . . . *I don't think I ever saw anything more like nature or perhaps as much. . . . What an extraordinary thing it is that some men can be found who deny the power of Landseer and compare such animals as Hancock to him. It seems incredible. I think it must be that Hancock being so generally admired they want to be original.*

as Gentlemen, and of access to Royalty. Of the two privileges, the latter was by far the more important. Victoria and Albert possessed a high sense of responsibility towards the arts, and they not only patronised artists extensively, but interested themselves both in the affairs of the Royal Academy and of the art world generally.

Landseer's first contact with the young Queen came two years after he became an Associate of the Academy, and it was to become one of those Royal attachments which were to enlighten the rather sombre pattern of Victorian court life. A portrait of her by Landseer was the first which Victoria sent to Albert in 1839, and it may have been that fact, the slightly Germanic flavour of his name, or just spiritual affinity, which commended the artist to the Prince Consort for the rest of his life. In 1840 he painted *Queen Victoria, the Prince Consort and the Princess Royal at Windsor*, a work which was shown at the exhibition of the King's Pictures a few years ago, and which sparkles with a freshness of observation and clarity of colour which are entirely engaging. Inevitably his attention was directed to the Royal pets, and the walls of Windsor Castle, which had once displayed the fleshy charms of Hanoverian concubines, now sported the chaster attractions of pointers, parrots and Pekinese, displayed in a style which was entirely Landseer's own.

In the course of his visits to Windsor and Balmoral, Landseer taught both Victoria and Albert to etch. He did not, however, encourage them to indulge in original compositions, nor did he lay before them the works of the Old Masters, but encouraged them to use their needles on reproductions of his own work. The Queen produced six, the Prince four, etchings *After the originals by Edwin Landseer, R.A.* Scotland was a common bond between them. Landseer had first gone there with Leslie in 1824, when he stayed with Sir Walter Scott, and painted that celebrity's dogs. Its attractions were as compelling to him as they were to most Victorians, and he became a constant member of the Royal *équipage* which every year wended its way north to Balmoral. 'His companions on hill and dale were the Dukes and Earls who hunted none the less for being expert critics and perfervid worshippers of art. With the Prince Consort he was able to organise shooting expeditions, or, when the weather was unpropitious, play billiards. He accompanied the Queen on many of her walks, helping her over the stiles, and assisting her in her sketches from nature' (later to appear in *Leaves from a Highland Journal*) wrote one of Landseer's biographers. It is not remarkable, therefore, that *Punch*, which in those days was not notorious for its devotion to the Throne, could be waspish about Landseer's royal connections. When criticising one of his pictures, its art critic observed: 'you are bound to unqualified commendation if the subject be Prince Albert's Hat, or the Queen's Macaw.' So certain were the Royal Couple of Landseer's friendship, that in 1850 they wrote to him on the eve of the election of a new President of the Royal Academy, suggesting that he should get across to his fellows the idea that the Queen would like Eastlake chosen, as he was 'by far the best person to fill that office, a gentleman of erudition, refined mind, and sound theory.' It is not therefore very surprising to find Lady Eastlake saying that in praise of Landseer, 'future generations will rival, but never surpass us', nor that in the same year he was knighted.

It was Lady Eastlake, too, whose *Journals and Correspondence* are a wonderful documentation of nineteenth-century English cultural life, who was responsible for introducing Landseer to the artist whom many thought to be his only possible rival, Rosa Bonheur. It was apparently the only unrealised ambition of her life to meet him, and when Lady Eastlake sent them down to dinner together 'the little face was streaming with tears.'

Official recognition, of course, took forms more tangible than those of mere friendship and respect. Landseer was one of those artists who decorated the summer house in Buckingham Palace gardens, now alas, destroyed, but once a touching monument to Royal enthusiasm for the fine arts. In 1848 he was commissioned, appropriately enough, to produce three animal subjects for the refreshment room of the House of Lords. For these he was paid the

PORTRAIT OF JOHN GIBSON, R.A. *By courtesy of the Royal Academy of Arts*

MARE AND FOAL

By courtesy of the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

A SKETCH AT WINDSOR CASTLE (1838)

EQUESTRIAN PORTRAIT *By courtesy of the Trustees of the Tate Gallery*

EDWIN LANDSEER

The Queen, Prince Consort and Princess Royal at Windsor Castle

Reproduced by gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen

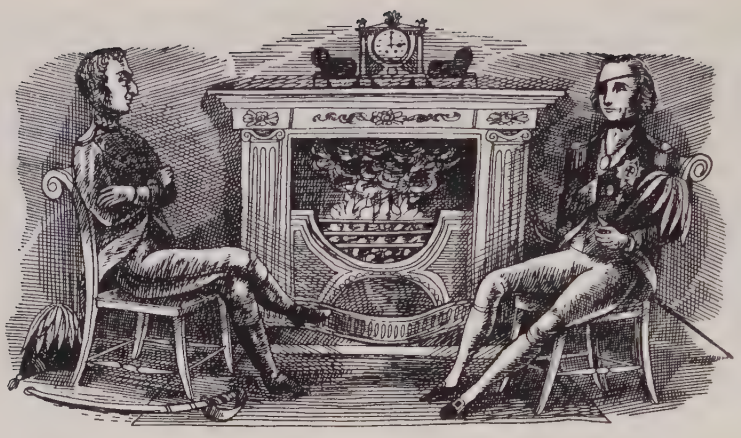
rather meagre sum of £1,500. One of them was the famous *Monarch of The Glen*, which rapidly became the most popular painting of the nineteenth century.

The popularity of this painting, and with it the success of Landseer, were due very largely to factors other than those of mere merit. The vogue of engravings, mainly in steel and wood, had completely altered the visual habits of the English nation. Engravings were disseminated on a huge scale, thanks to improvements in the mechanics of reproduction, and to many Victorian artists, Landseer included, a painting became little more than the preliminary stage in the production of an engraving. Immense sums were paid for reproduction rights, and though they contributed both to the popularity and to the economic success of artists, they too frequently led to a marked deterioration in their work. This was not only because of the temptation to excessive sentimentality which a popular market implied, but to the fact that an artist became careless about the actual quality of his painting. This is especially noticeable in the case of Landseer. The fresh Rubenesque colouring of his earlier works gave way to a dead, leaden complexion, and he maintained a consistently high artistic level only in his drawings and in his portraits—some of which are very fine.

His popularity as what the French call an *animalier* was of course phenomenal, and received its canonisation when he was commissioned to design the lions in Trafalgar Square. The reasons for its existence are involved and difficult to disentangle. In part they sprang from that romantic conception of 'wild nature' which had been popularised by Rousseau, and woven into the general structure of nineteenth-century European culture. But in part they were bound up with a particularly English attitude to art. We have always had a penchant for the didactic and the 'improving'; we have always fought shy of the human figure, and the vague sense of immorality which has so often become connected with the idea of art. Excursions into the animal world enabled us to employ improving parables for the one, whilst avoiding the dangerous temptations of the other. Redgrave partly explained it when he said of Landseer, 'Unlike other animal painters, he infused into his creations an almost human element which, while it did not interfere with the finest perception of animal nature, added a tender sentiment or a delicate humour to the subject of his brush, wanting in the pictures of other artists in the same line.' The mere fact that he worked hard also told in his favour, and in an article in *The Quarterly* (Vol. 62) Lord Francis Egerton wrote of him, 'If there be one painter of our time who deserves praise for the example of labour united with genius, it is Mr. Landseer.'

He was, however, by no means as antisocial as these praises would seem to imply. Constable, who disliked him intensely at one point, ridiculed his 'shirt frills reaching from his chin to below his navel, and his head beautifully decorated with a thousand curls.' A great success in the rather boisterous society of the time. Landseer could sing, mimic people, dance to perfection, tell funny stories, and indulge in mild practical jokes of the kind which annoyed nobody. That he was the prey to many conflicts goes without saying. He was, to begin with, of very short stature, and he never married, nor is much known about his emotional life, except at one point there was talk of his becoming engaged to a Dowager Duchess. There were also rumours that towards the end of his life he became a dipsomaniac, and he had several mysterious 'nervous' breakdowns which involved a complete cessation of work and withdrawal from society.

If artistic reputations are to be assessed in terms of prices, few have fallen more drastically than Landseer's. Paintings which were bought for several thousand pounds in the last century were sold for a few pounds in the 'twenties of this. But now his market is beginning to harden. Critical clichés are no substitute for the clear, independent judgments which every work of art demands, and there are as many reasons for believing that Landseer could produce a good painting as for suspecting that Samuel Palmer or William Blake could produce a bad one.



FAMOUS MEETING

ROBERT GITTINGS

'In this divine glass they see face to face; and their converse is free . . .'
—William Penn

1805

I only met Lord Nelson once, and that
The oddest damned encounter in my life.
Down in the waiting-room, the right-hand side,
The old Colonial Office:—how many officers,
And of long service too, have sat, wriggled, rubbed off
Another gloss of scarlet leather with
The braided serge of half-pay backsides; or
Drawn from those moulting arms the curling horsehair,
Black and spring-coiled like a mulatto's:—waited,
I say, while Mister Secretary of State
Within has blown the dust off his reports,
Sneezed, cleared his nose with snuff and cups of tea,
And steered his finger slowly down the alphabet,
The file, with six-and-twenty stopping-places,
From the first A to U, V, W—W!—
Ah, here it comes! W—Wellesley,
Sir Arthur, Major-General, served us in India
Some years, just home, afterwards—why, what's this?
Eighteen-one-five not eighteen-owe?—afterwards
W—Wellington, Duke of, General Commanding
In the Peninsular, and at W—turn up
Another file for that—W—bless my soul—
At Waterloo! Ha! Quickly, ring for more tea,
The file's gone mad, ten years ahead of time,
Put it back on the shelf, eighteen-owe-five,
Sir Arthur Wellesley in the waiting-room,
And keep him waiting!

I was prepared to wait,
But what's it now this doorman fellow's saying?
'A naval officer sitting in there already?'
So much the better: chance of some service chat.
We rust abroad. Tropical sweat tarnishes
Our barrack sword. Our blood is Ganges water.
We bring ashore a cloud of troop-ship air,
Pestilent to intelligence, out-of-date
As the brown senna pages of gazettes
That never reach us till the news is false
And old. So Service loses to Civilian
Hand over fist, and politicians bloom
In our mistakes, and aim their masterpieces
In ignorance of us, as we of them.
And who pays then? The men, the living articles
That form the first line of our enterprise.
Yes, every time, the men. The crimes that folly
Commits are worse than wisdom ever planned,
Preventable, and being done, irremediable.
A foolish commander like a charlatan priest
Delivers his charge to hell.

News then my need,
News that had passed me on the Portsmouth Road,
Hissing between the ostlers as we changed
Horses beside the chestnut tree at Liphook,
All the same name that certainty and rumour
Both spoke in every accent—Buonaparte!
What had he done while I apprenticed, fighting
Deluded Rajahs and their French paymasters,
A Sepoy general, nine years orient-bound,
While he, the square, squat, swarthy Corsican
Held all the west at heel? No wonder then
The Portsmouth Road seemed paved with whispers: 'He is there,
Just there, across the Channel, a fleet of boats;
The big hills of Boulogne are full of Frenchmen,
Two hundred thousand of them; here at home,
On every height above eight hundred feet,
The blind, gigantic, wooden scarecrow arms
Of semaphores, set for one signal—Invasion.'
Invasion! No one knew another word
That dusty way to London. But how disposed?
What force? How planned the attack? What corner of coast
The feint, where the full onslaught? And what news
Of the first consideration, life or death
To us and them, the navy, ours and theirs?—
Professional questions, skipped and skimped by all
Alike at Whitehall and at wayside halt.
A fellow officer in the waiting-room?
I wanted news, and in I went.

And saw
The sight that every soul in England knows,
From the small mud-boy diving for pennies in
The filth of Portsmouth Hard, up to their headships
The Lords of Admiralty, where the great portrait
Stares down the board-room's cricket-pitch of table
And candle-starred mahogony:—the white face
Chipped out of chalk, the sideway jut of jaw,
The black patch where the eye had been, the limp
Sleeve where the arm had been, the long thin feet
Dancing the carpet like a quarter-deck,
As restless as the sea, being on land,
Aboard, the dead calm that conceals the storm
Of victory.
I recognised him, oh yes.
Easily enough, and by less modest signs.
The man was plastered like a mountebank
With medals. What was it poor John Moore once said?
'More like the Prince of an Opera than the Conqueror
Of the Nile.' He swivelled his single eye at me,
As blue and glazing as the Dog-star, took
One look, saw, I suppose, no rank about me
Except my old grey hunting-coat, a person
With two eyes and two arms, but nothing else
To cause the crowd to cheer—then launched at me,
No, salvoed rather, like a broadside, such
A tirade, and in a style so vain, so silly,
Such rhodamontade terms as, I confess,
Surprised and almost disgusted me. He spoke—
Uttered, perhaps, since speech implies at least
Some notice taken of the listener—uttered
The devil's own trash of statements strung together
Like trophies from a seaman's ditty-box,
Relics of battle and drink and foreign ports
And women—we were spared nothing, oh believe me,
Of Emma Hamilton and the dago kings
Who greased him up in macaroni honours,
With fat castrati howling odes of praise,
Then back to Emma once again, and then
The sailor's life, how hard to be at sea
With love at home, and then, of course, a shy
At the damned flat-footed soldiers who kept him,
Lord Nelson, fending all the French in Europe
Off England's bosom with his one hand—impossible
How, I say, to conceive that any officer,
With high command twin-eagled on his shoulders,
Could patter away a part so light and trivial
At wildfire random to a stranger.
Something
I said—there was occasion for one word—
May, I suppose, have made him guess that I
Was somebody too. At all events, he left
The room, muttering some message for the doorman—

I knew at once that he was off to ask
The fellow what my name was—so I waited,
Wishing myself in any place but this,
While the dull clock with dumb gold look and two
Black sphinxes back-to-back at either side
Ticked on the quarter. A door banged. He returned.
I shifted, and saw a different man. Yes, even,
I swear, his features and his body had
An altered shape. He wore his uniform
Not as a costume but a command. He seemed
Much smaller, yet that much greater, and his talk,
No longer littered with eternal ego,
All sensible, manly, servicelike, sincere,
And strung to high affairs, both in this country
And on the continent—I do not know that I
Ever enjoyed a conversation more
Than his, this fellow like a paradise-bird
With something near to beauty in his maimed face,
As if some northern light of fatal omen
Shone in that frowsty cabin, while the clock jerked
Its steps to the half-hour.
One speech of his
Stays in my mind. We spoke of Buonaparte.
I gave it as my set opinion that
His whole career had been a gambler's; he,
Like a grand highwayman, went thundering on
A turnpike of successes, knowing at last
The gallows waited stark for him, his policy,
So-called, a fantasy of force and menace
Aided by fraud, a furor, a delusion,
A dream.
Lord Nelson said—this was, at least,
The meaning though not the method of the terms
He used: 'He is deceived. It is the worst
Of all corruptions in these unrooted minds
Who live by desperate courses, that at the last
The nightmare conjuration of their wits
Becomes a creed, and they the worshippers
Of a wild god, whose stem and origin is
The angry reflex of their fears. So they
Themselves corrupt themselves, and haunt their lives
With their own spectre shadow-play. And yet
How can one measure the temptations? How

Assess the labyrinth-coil that leads at last
To that dark minotaur in its lonely cave,
The soul of a great man prisoned by success?
There he must wait immured. The sunshine world
Hums on outside with mayfly change, but he
Is fixed in isolation as a creature
In irons, no one to question, to devolve
Decision built like coral from the lives
Of millions of ephemera, but he alone
Their arbiter, he alone their scapegoat, and
Alone, the main note like a Moscow bell
Tolling over snow deserts alone, alone,
There is no orphanage like success, no stroke
Of fate's effectual angel-sword more clean
To cut a man off from his humanity. So
It happens his loneliness, little by little, tempts him
Into mistaken suspicion. He takes sides
With nameless sanctions for and against himself,
Viewing the world as a silent plot, as a deaf man
Does, who imagines his reputation lip-read
On every curl of mouth and downward grimace,
The gesture damned by interpretation. Thence
He strikes out in defiance also, spends
His whole display against some trivial object,
Whose weak avoiding makes his blows ridiculous,
His strength an idiot's. Thus he seems mad to those
Whose lack of knowledge matches his, when all
The fault is the deep moat of our human life,
Dug round each separate soul. I know it too,
And feel it too, and do it. Only, by moments,
An eyelid dawn of duty, pin-point-rare,
Pierces the misted air; and for that I pray,
That single-worded duty.'
And with that word,
Duty, upon his lips, the summons came—
The doorman-headed Cerberus, I mean,
Knocking and ushering him forth—to what? I never
Saw him again. The crowds viewed him once only.
He too changed horses on the Portsmouth Road,
And then eternity.
Yes, it's an odd thought.
Suppose the Secretary of State had been
Less of what God had led him to be—suppose
Lord Nelson had been sent for when the first
Thin quarter struck, and I had only heard
The peacock-grating horror of his effrontery,
How would I know his spirit now, how hear
The noble echo that his name retorts
To any slander? Truly I wish as much
Were done for me; yes, and for Buonaparte.
Perhaps it is. God knows, God ought to know.

The World of Books

THE STRUGGLE FOR EUROPE By Chester Wilmot. *Collins.* 25s.

Reviewed by Max Beloff

Mr. Chester Wilmot was an outstanding war correspondent and has now proved that he is an excellent historian. For, in the first place, his book consists of a detailed account of the land-war in the West, both in planning and execution from Dunkirk to the end, based upon German as well as Allied sources, and making use of personal interrogation as well as of the study of documents. But the excitement aroused by the book is not due to its presentation of the detailed story of the fighting, so much as by the arguments that Mr. Wilmot has used his narrative to support and illustrate. Of these arguments there are essentially two, interwoven like the first and second themes of a symphonic movement.

The first argument is directly related to military operations. Mr. Wilmot is substantially a defender of the Montgomery as against the Eisenhower-Bradley view of the war in the West, of the strategy of forcing the enemy to defeat himself by forcing him to provide opportunities for a concentrated attack at vital points, as against the American liking for the direct assault all along the line at roughly equal strength. For him, the original breakout in Normandy was due to Montgomery's original plan which Eisenhower and the Americans only partially grasped; and the war might, in his view, have ended in 1944, had Montgomery's wish for concentration upon the northern flank been carried out, and had Eisenhower's eventual acceptance of this idea not been frustrated 'by the evasive Bradley' and 'the intransigent Patton'. But these differences in turn arose, as he shows, from a fundamentally different approach to warfare itself, from Marshall's insistence that all that mattered was the build-up in numbers, and from the American unwillingness to worry about the strategic and tactical problems of their employment, or about new mechanical devices—an unwillingness which cost them dear on the Normandy beaches.

But this difference about methods of waging war, which arose naturally out of the very different circumstances of the two countries, was enhanced by the political differences between them in this particular war. There was the general American reluctance to look beyond the military operations themselves to their political objectives, and there were their particular disagreements over the specific problems arising mainly out of two things: Roosevelt's trust in the goodwill of the Russians and his unwillingness to worry about giving them new positions of advantage, and less obvious, but no less important, the general 'anti-colonialism' which Roosevelt shared with his compatriots. The war in the Pacific must be an American war and must not include among its objectives the restoration to their rulers of the territories Japan had overrun, except in China. In the circumstances, Roosevelt and Marshall did well to insist so successfully on the priority of the European struggle, though even so, the supply of the invasion force was hampered by the demands of the Pacific, and by the Anglophobia of Admiral King, 'never a man to miss an opportunity of embarrassing his country's principal ally.' The consequence of the American policies in the Pacific, combined with the great desire to see Russia in the war there too, need hardly be enlarged upon, and are peripheral to Mr. Chester Wilmot's story.

In Europe, there was the insistence that the attack must be through France and only through France and the dismissal of all Churchill's efforts to focus attention on the Balkans and the Mediterranean as 'British imperialism'. This attitude was responsible first for the failure fully to exploit the fall of Mussolini, and then for what Mr. Wilmot regards as the basic blunder, the weakening of the Italian front for the totally unnecessary 'Operation Anvil' in southern France—a view for which he can quote the impressive support of the American General Mark Clark. But

for this decision, the Allied armies might have got well into the Central European Plain before the Russians, and the unbalance of post-war Europe been partially avoided. Even after the Russians' total refusal to conform to the Rooseveltian stereotype had been demonstrated, Eisenhower deliberately refrained from getting first to either Berlin or Prague. In the end, the British insistence of making strategy depend on the wider political view was successful only in the case of Denmark and Greece; and in the latter, Britain's essential action against the Communists was denounced not by the Russians, but by the Americans.

Mr. Wilmot ends on an optimistic note —and indeed when one looks at the American achievements as a whole in the last decade, how can one avoid optimism? But on the political side, there is still a good deal of evidence that the American reluctance to look beyond the next move may still exist. Are Americans not prone already to make, in the case of Germany, the mistakes they undoubtedly made in dealing with Russia? Certainly it is to be hoped that however much the personal pride of some American soldiers may be wounded, this book, especially where politics are concerned, may receive equal study on both sides of the Atlantic.

AFTER ALL

The Autobiography of Norman Angell. *Hamish Hamilton.* 18s.

Reviewed by Gordon Rattray Taylor

It is with a wry expression that one picks one's way through Sir Norman Angell's significantly titled autobiography—which, incidentally, is much less an autobiography than still another in the long series of polemic pamphlets about war with which his name is associated.

Here is the story of a man, now 77, who has concentrated all his exceptional energy into trying to avert war, yet who has seen two world wars and may live to see a third—a man, in short, who has failed; at the same time a man whose *magnum opus, The Great Illusion,* has been translated into a score of languages and still retains such interest that, thirty years after its first appearance, it could sell a quarter of a million copies in a Penguin edition; a man to propagate whose ideas a special trust, the Garton Foundation, was established under the chairmanship of no less a man than Lord Esher; in short, a man who has succeeded in gaining attention for his ideas as have few others. Today there must be scarcely a man, woman or child in Europe who remains a victim to the Great Illusion. Yet war threatens as ominously as ever. What went wrong with Angell's calculation? Did he pour out all this energy quite in vain? That is the question which visibly haunts him. Throughout this unhappy, inhuman book, he searches frantically for the missing clue. *This* is what I said in 1921. *That* is what I wrote for my election manifesto in 1922. Can I make it any clearer? Perhaps a dialogue with an imaginary interlocutor will make the fools see it? It is this sense of frenzied, fruitless persistence, coupled with the absence of any sort of human insight into the people with whom he came in contact, which gives the reader the uneasy sense of prying into a private torture-chamber.

Yet the fatal defect of Angell's approach is painfully simple. *The Great Illusion* argued, with unexampled force and clarity, that today no war can be economically advantageous, either for victor or vanquished. (By many this message was misunderstood: they thought that Angell was arguing that war, because economically unprofitable, was politically impossible. Actually, of course, he was desperately aware of the likelihood of war, and it was precisely to avert it that he launched into pamphleteering.) He argued insistently that we must forget the irrational suspicions with which one nation views another, and must study, calmly and intelligently, the legitimate grievances of each in order to devise a rational solution of them. Thus while maintaining that men's behaviour is irrational, he seeks by rational appeals to change it; when he fails, he redoubles his efforts to clarify his appeal to rationality. Angell is, in fact, an old-fashioned liberal trying to convince a world which, unhappily, is new-fashioned and illiberal. Today, thanks chiefly to Freud, we are beginning to understand something of the working of the irrational forces which make for war: the driving

ambition of the paranoiac, the dark obsessions of sadism, the way in which a cunning leader enslaves a people by exploiting their unconscious guilt, and by providing opportunities to project on to others the hatred they feel for themselves. If war can be prevented (and what an *if*), it must be by containing and dissipating such forces and by breaking up the processes, partly blind and partly planned, which exploit them. In short, we are beginning to realise that it is not by forgetting the irrational suspicions and studying the legitimate grievances that we should seek to avert war: it is by forgetting the legitimate grievances and studying the irrational suspicions. Of this vast, complex, and probably impracticable obligation, Angell has no inkling.

But it is not simply our awareness of his inevitable failure which gives this book its strange flavour. It is the paradox of his worldly success. The man who wrote a pamphlet which no publisher would touch, and which, when published privately, no editor would review, becomes the associate of figures as contrasted as Northcliffe and Esher, Ramsay MacDonald and H. G. Wells, the recipient of a knighthood and the Nobel Peace Prize. Not only, it seems, is it true that nothing fails like success; sometimes it is also true that nothing succeeds like failure.

PANZER LEADER

By General Heinz Guderian. Translated by Constantine Fitzgibbon. *Michael Joseph.* 35s.

Reviewed by George Edinger

As a pioneer in armoured warfare, General Guderian can be certain of his place in military history. He has written a standard work which posterity may put on the bookshelf alongside Mahan's book on Sea Power. But his volume has two failings: *Panzer Leader* exacts concentrated attention throughout, for there is no passage in these five hundred close-packed pages that grips, thrills, amuses or surprises. Worse still, in a well-meant effort to conceal the tank-like ponderosity of the writer, his English publishers have dressed up the book as though it were some ephemeral piece of controversial journalism by an ace reporter. The author, too, has made a mistake by trying to explain away his loyalty to an odious regime, particularly as that explanation is singularly unconvincing. General Guderian would have been better advised to remain consistent, to have preserved his non-political approach after the fall of Hitler, just as he did while the Fuehrer was in power. And yet it is precisely this least valuable aspect of the book that is most heavily stressed, being prefaced by an apologia from Captain Liddell Hart who might be more helpful to the German Officer Corps if he exercised a greater measure of discrimination between German generals.

Captain Liddell Hart suggests that Heinz Guderian is no more to be blamed than certain British and American generals who fought in some dubious nineteenth-century wars by methods that would undoubtedly have given free play to the forensic indignation of those who prosecuted war criminals. But there is such a thing as proportion in historic parallels. Neither Havelock nor Sherman, to take the most relentless, served a Government which systematically did twelve million non-combatants to death.

Guderian himself is even less convincing. His unfortunate departures from the theme of tank warfare indulge too freely in the self pity that overcame all Germans, after Germany lost the war. He bewails the outbreak of a struggle that would bring 'such sufferings to German wives and mothers', but appears indifferent to the ordeals of any other wives or mothers. He, the servant of Hitler, complains that the Czechs 'would not see reason' in 1938, and when he speculates on the officers' plot to overthrow Nazism in 1944, it is with the ingenuous comment: 'I refuse to accept murder in any form. Our Christian religion forbids it.' And yet he sat ('unwillingly') on the Court which deprived his fellow generals of their military status as a deliberate prelude to handing them over to the Gestapo torturers, while admitting that many of the victims were guilty of nothing more than the refusal to betray a brother officer to Himmler's murder machine. Again he writes: 'The atrocities carried out in those (concentration) camps were made known to most

people, as to myself, only after the collapse.' That depends on what you mean by an atrocity. For six years before the War, and the gas ovens, the horrors that went on at Dachau and Buchenwald were mentioned privately by every German with fear and sometimes with shame. The whole German Press, led by papers like *Angriff*, *Stuermer* and *Schwarze Korps*, was one long exhortation to cruelty and hate like the speeches of every Party leader. Guderian must have been very fully engrossed in his tank tactics to have heard no evil, seen no evil and spoken of no evil between 1933 and 1945, nor to have conceived where all this was bound to lead.

In fairness it must be added that the author flatly contradicts certain English apologists for our ex-enemy. He can find no evidence that Hitler halted his tanks outside Dunkirk from any desire to spare the B.E.F. He denies that the Fuehrer ever made a serious peace offer to Britain, admits that the treatment of the Ukrainians by the S.S. made enemies of potential friends and pays a generous tribute to the French troops fighting bravely under an ossified command and an irresolute Government in May and June 1940.

The chief interest of the book lies in the passages that explain how Hitler's revolutionary dynamic, coupled with his inferiority complex when confronted with the old school generals, enabled Guderian to try out his idea of using massed tanks as a spearhead, while all the General Staffs in Europe, steeped in the 1914–18 tradition, insisted on dispersing tanks as supports for infantry. But Guderian, backed by Hitler, did not have to worry about the General Staff. De Gaulle was less lucky. And yet Hitler, never certain of himself, repeatedly called an untimely halt to Guderian's tanks, completely lacked the moral courage to hear bad news and generally displayed that arrogance in success and spinelessness in disaster which is one of the least attractive traits of the least attractive Germans. *Panzer Leader* is an excellent document of the Western Campaign in 1940 and the Eastern Campaign of 1941. But it suffers from a lack of colour and character, though the translator has fought gallantly with a heavy and turgid German text.

THE LIBERAL IMAGINATION

By Lionel Trilling. *Secker & Warburg.* 15s.

Reviewed by John Cocking

This is a book to be taken seriously and with pleasure.

The sixteen essays which compose it were originally published in reviews between 1940 and 1949; seven are concerned with writers or writings and the rest vary in subject from 'The Sense of the Past' to 'The Kinsey Report'. This last is the best antidote I have met for the bad taste (both senses) of the Report itself. 'The dialectic of culture has its jokes, and *alma Venus* having once been called to preside protectively over science, the situation is now reversed. The Venus of the Report does not, like the Venus of *De Rerum Natura*, shine in the light of the heavenly signs, nor does the earth put forth flowers for her. She is rather fusty and hole-in-the-corner and no doubt it does not help her charm to speak of her in terms of mean frequencies of 3.2.'

The Liberal Imagination is packed full of ideas, all concerned with the necessary compromises or syntheses (Hegel's sense) of the present. The title refers to the main compromise; liberal rationalism, temporarily unable to meet its creditors but by no means bankrupt, is to draw on the 'variousness and possibility', the 'terror and mystery' of the imaginative life, as John Stuart Mill turned from suicide to the poetry of Coleridge. Freud's great attraction for Trilling lies in his exploration of the irrational, not as dominant but as reclaimable by reason. But Freud dismissed art as 'substitute gratification', an idea which Trilling rejects in two remarkable essays ('Freud and Literature' and 'Art and Neurosis') in which Freud is shown to have been most illuminating about art when he was not discussing it.

Trilling is quite ready, though, to use Freud's methods to get at the 'inner meanings' of literature, sometimes, perhaps, too ready. In the essay on 'The Princess Casamissima', he refers to Chapter XXV of 'A Small Boy and Others', where 'James tells how he was initiated into a knowledge of style in the Galerie d'Apollon of the Louvre. As James represents the

event, the varieties of style in that gallery assailed him so intensely that their impact quite transcended aesthetic experience. For they seemed to speak to him not visually at all but in some "complicated sound" and as a "deafening chorus"; they gave him what he calls "a general sense of glory". About this sense of glory he is quite explicit. "The glory meant ever so many things at once, not only beauty and art and supreme design, but history and fame and power, the world in fine raised to the richest and noblest expression".'

James felt the effect both of a 'love-philtre' and a 'fear-philtre'. Later he had a nightmare; terrified by the typical situation of an intruder assailing the door of his room, he summoned an aggression greater than his fear and chased the awful form down a corridor which was revealed, at the moment of triumph, as the *Galerie d'Apollon*. And Trilling interprets: 'aggression brings guilt and then fear.'

James does not mention guilt; but the sense of glory, aggression, threat is in his account and interestingly it awakens echoes of Malraux's attitude in the *Psychologie de L'Art* (now rewritten and republished in one volume as *Les Voix du Silence*). So does Hyacinth's letter from Venice in 'The Princess Casamissima'—'want and toil and suffering are the constant lot of the immense majority of the human race. What has struck me is the great achievements of which man has been capable in spite of them.' It is thanks to art that 'the world is less of a "bloody sell" and life more of a lark.' For James and Malraux art is style, and style is adventure, aggression, and the expressiveness of style is more than aesthetic, is 'history and fame and power'. Both see the present 'profiting thus, to one's dim historic vision, confusedly though it might be, by the unparalleled luxury and variety of its heritage.'

Malraux's 'Museum without Walls' is vaster than James's and raised an even more deafening chorus, more overwhelming and bewildering. He undertakes the intellectual comparison between styles which James felt to be unnecessary. But the echoes from one to the other are striking enough to make one wonder whether

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CASSELL

Malraux was sometimes moved by James's experience.

There are echoes, too, from Trilling himself to Malraux—in the discussion of the part played by the 'pastness' of a work of art in our appreciation of it, in the distinction made by both between the true artist's mastery of his imaginative material and the submission of child and lunatic 'artists' to theirs (here Charles Lamb, twice quoted by Trilling, spoke first in his essay 'On the Sanity of True Genius'). Trilling warns us against trying to trace an idea from writer to writer as though it were 'the baton that is handed from runner to runner in a relay race.' The attempt is likely, he suggests, to be more like the parlour game where a sentence whispered about in a circle emerges recognisable but transformed. James, Trilling and Malraux build their common ideas into personal and distinct moral attitudes; the attraction of Trilling's is its natural balance.

THE COMMON PURSUIT

By F. R. Leavis. *Chatto & Windus.* 18s.

Reviewed by Edmund Penning-Rowsell

No living critic has done more to enforce re-consideration of the canons and standards of English literature than Dr. Leavis. Few occupants of a niche in the literary pantheon have not been made to account for their tenancy, and merciless castigation awaits those and their sponsors —particularly the loudly-acclaimed candidates—whose papers are not in order to Dr. Leavis's satisfaction. He is also an astringent critic of literary critics. But although the issues of *Scrutiny*, from which most of the essays in this book are drawn, must often prove painful reading to his opponents, their controversial tone has certainly sent many readers back to the originals, often to return convinced by the brilliant analysis. At times the argument becomes a little too labyrinthine for the general reader who, on reading the attack on Dr. Tillyard in the essay 'In Defence of Milton', might feel that it could as well have been called 'In Defence of Dr. Leavis'. And although the possibility of a rejoinder by his victims is admitted in the preface, their replies can scarcely be as barbed as the attack. After quoting an opinion of Dr. Tillyard on *L'Allegro*, he adds: 'These remarks, it seems to me, can only have the effect of discrediting the writer's very large pretensions.' His continuing assault on Bridges for the treatment of Hopkins's poetry is well known, and when the editor of Hopkins's letters to Bridges, Professor Abbott, supports the Poet Laureate, his intention is described as being 'to bolster a self-importance that feels itself threatened by all that Hopkins represents.'

However, the justification for Dr. Leavis's criticism is that his displayed evidence is often convincing; if his gods are not always divine to others, he is no partisan of any school. In his *Common Pursuit*—the search for true judgment—he is loyal only to the standards of criticism as he sees them. In some of his essays he is engaged in rescuing the great figures of literature from their supporters and critics, in liberating Johnson from the middlebrows, Milton from the academics. Perhaps the most striking study is the one on *Othello*. Here the late A. C. Bradley is the adversary whose corpse must be cleared from the battlefield to permit a masterly analysis of Othello's character. Dr. Leavis succeeds in showing that it is the Moor and not Iago who is the most interesting figure of the drama. His fall is caused not by the superior intellect and scheming of Iago, but by his own inner failings, the moral weaknesses often found in a man full of outward confidence and strength.

For the general reader Dr. Leavis is stimulating, but also somewhat discouraging. His justifiable insistence on standards at times leads to an aristocratic Olympianism, in which only a select few are permitted to pass value-judgments—'there seems to be a general view that anyone can read a novel.' This restriction of criticism cannot be beneficial to literature—and Dr. Leavis provides us with the best of reasons for distrusting the experts. It is with certain basic assumptions that some will feel inclined to differ from one whose passionate concern for true judgment is wholly admirable. Is the atmosphere on Olympus sometimes too rarified for literature and life?

IRELAND'S ABBEY THEATRE

By Lennox Robinson. *Sidgwick & Jackson.* 30s.

Reviewed by Robert Greacen

The curtain of the Abbey Theatre fell at precisely 10.15 p.m., 17 July last, so ending still another performance of *The Plough and the Stars*. By 11.00 p.m. players and staff had abandoned the Theatre to its ghosts and mice. An hour and a half later two young men passing in the street noticed that the building was in flames.

Mr. Robinson reminds us of that wet day in 1898 when Edward Martyn brought W. B. Yeats to lunch at Lady Gregory's country home in the west of Ireland; because of the rain all three stayed indoors during the afternoon. 'Our talk turned on plays,' said Lady Gregory in her subsequent account. They decided there and then to collect enough money for a theatrical venture and initially to take a Dublin Theatre where they would perform Martyn's *The Heather Field* and Yeats' *The Countess Cathleen*. Out of this experiment emerged the world-famous Abbey Theatre, which in its early days was largely financed through the generosity of a Manchester lady, Miss Horniman.

To say that the Abbey Theatre had to be fought for would be an understatement: frequently sniped at by different sides as subversive, unpatriotic and immoral, its small band of enthusiasts courageously rode out many storms. It is rather disappointing that Mr. Robinson tells only the facts about these rows, that he fails to take the reader into his confidence. What a vivid and exciting book Mr. Robinson could have written (and perhaps one day will write) about the Abbey, its founders, playwrights, actors and enemies!

Ireland's Abbey Theatre, then, is a history intended for those already interested; and, like all good histories, it is heavily documented, giving the dates and complete casts of all first productions. Its thirty excellent illustrations spotlight celebrities, back-stage workers and the Theatre itself. In a couple of years the Abbey company will return from its temporary refuge, the Queen's Theatre, to a fine new building on the site of the old one.

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THE VILLAGE By Marghanita Laski. *Cresset Press.* 12s. 6d.
CATHERINE CARTER By Pamela Hansford Johnson. *Macmillan.* 12s. 6d.

Reviewed by Stevie Smith

Le Spleen Absolute is MR. WYNDHAM LEWIS's contribution to the gaiety of our times, and it is no mean one. The first story in the book is called the 'Bishop's Fool'; all the stories are linked, pick and choose. Samuel Hartley-Rymer (Rev.) is a grinning poor soul of a High Church gargoyle, pink as to politics. Flapping patched and sliced garments in the village east wind, he comes running down the street with his shopping basket, falling over biting dogs, gay in the stony faces of his parishioners, offending, but not really, poor fellow, offensive; silly: 'Are you saying,' Rymer inquired (of the author himself, projected into the story, artist-hunter from London, pinning his shaggy butterfly) 'that a stupid person cannot possess a conscience?' 'Obviously not so good a one as a wise man.' 'Oh!' howled Rymer. All the persons in this book are pinned butterflies, not always worth the pinning, for this author fills his head with a lot of bosh as well as some bright sense. He preaches in the roaring way they preached in the days of the Visible Fiend, but often his pulpit is a flying tub. But one fancies the nonsense and the blasting; it ties one up in the peculiar pain of violent laughter. Satire never does this; it is something anarchic, a cock of the snook at the powers of heaven and hell, a dig in the ribs of the First Cause. There are times all the same when Master Insolence falls flat for all his bright genius, so pick, choose and skip.

The Rival Monster is another Highland Fling by Mr. Compton Mackenzie, but he is getting to be now the dancer who performs prettily but all the same the first fervour has given place to second thoughts —*with a one, two, three hop, and-a-one-two-three, and with luck, if there isn't an encore, we shall all get home to tea.* In fact, the old pro., the jolly old trouper. There are passages in this tale of Ben Nevis, popular Laird, and the eccentric persons he associates with, which are very funny indeed. In matters of the Press, for instance, Mr. Mackenzie is as lively as he is foot-sure. This: 'Today everybody on the staff of the *Scottish Daily Tale* was walking more jauntily after a visit from no less a Highland personality than Donald MacDonald, Twenty-Third of Ben Nevis, who drove specially from Glenbogle Castle to discuss with the editor of the *Scottish Daily Tale* . . . ', etc. The Laird's first purpose in visiting the editor was to skin him alive, but they finished up fast friends, finding they had Highland blood in common and a serious approach to the migrations of the Loch Ness Monster, chased by Flying Saucers, which is the book's theme. Into the picture and the chase come some crusted Cockney characters, ex-Caledonia, and the whole rompish thing is punctuated (giving time for breathing space between furious fighting bouts) by these wily excerpts from the Press and by some masterly solicitors' letters. If one had never read such a book before, it would come livelier, but one has, of course, and not always from so practised a hand as Mr. Mackenzie's. Perhaps he would do well to drop the Mackenzie for a bit and concentrate on the Compton. But a man has a right to his fancies, and one can see that a Mackenzie collateral, born in West Hartlepool and educated at St. Paul's and Magdalen College, Oxford, is in a strong position to hanker after the North and make a song of it.

TIM HAZARD is a boy growing up in Nevada, U.S.A. We have him in class 'diagramming' sentences (parsing?). It is co-ed. 'Suddenly Lucy put an arm around him and blew on his neck inside his open collar.' Mr. Clark has a talent for making everything seem very effervescent—scenery, families, above all, sex, have this fresh liveliness. This is just as well because otherwise the prodigious detail of young Tim's growing up might pall.

Tim is by no means a bore but the author is overfond of him; no doubt it is himself when young, like *Ah Wilderness.* Tim is one of those 'nice American kids' who always seem to have to be written about at the point of having a good cry because of the perils with which their path is beset (sex) and the American miracle of sheer soundness which keeps them good. The other children are not particularly good, but 'cute' too. Differences and similarities in the Anglo-American tradition give some more interest to the book. Americans like boys and girls to play fathers and mothers and being grown-up; this is 'cute.' In England the idea is to keep them children as long as possible, which, seeing it cannot be very long in any case, seems reasonable. Of course the overgrown English schoolgirl is a nuisance but she is a more tolerable nuisance than the sexually precocious Lucys and Gladyses of this book. It must be difficult, too for a little girl to be a scholar in these stirring mixed schools. Such a poor beast would be very unpopular—undated, frustrated, un-bunched with stephanotis, already that bogey-lady of American mythology—an old maid. But there is plenty of enjoyment in this book.

MISS MARGHANITA LASKI'S novel is obviously a disciplined piece of work; it is so simple and straightforward, and the obvious traps inherent in the theme (temptation to over-write and sentimentalise) have been so skilfully sidestepped. Indeed, one feels sometimes manhandling rather than control is what the Muse has endured. The village she writes about is growing into a small town and it is very class-conscious. The people who are 'our sort' wear tweeds and live on diminishing pensions and dividends; the tradespeople wear cardigan coats over

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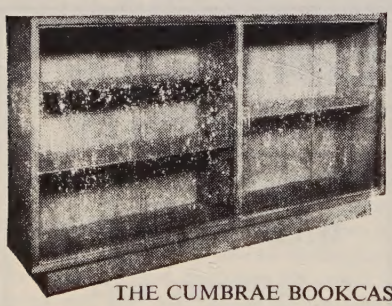
jersey dresses and have a lot of money; the poor are just poor. The story is chiefly about Margaret, the 'right' sort of girl, with an unsuccessful ex-army officer father and a bad-tempered mother, who has a nervous breakdown on account of Margaret not knowing her place and also on account of having to do the washing-up and fire-lighting without the help of that dear old char, Mrs. Wilson. Margaret indeed does not know her place, because she falls in love with Mrs. Wilson's boy, back from the wars, and he loves Margaret and he is earning £15 a week. 'Ridiculous,' screams the Major, ruefully reckoning on a bare £4 a week himself. Miss Laski deals honestly with the young lovers and does nothing to twist their happy story to make it more exciting. The coming in of rich industrialists to the village community is part of the story. The American rich wife is democratic but only in the dollar sense; not class but income shows a man for what he is, *she* thinks. But Margaret's cheerful young man is so unambitious, a proud compositor he, aristocrat of a proud trade. No, he will not go over to Management; so the American lady washes her hands of them. It is life in little and the implication that what America is to England, the well-paid English technician is to the landed classes, is interesting.

MISS PAMELA HANSFORD JOHNSON'S story is a love story and a stage story of the days of the Bancrofts and the Lyceum, and if her hero, Henry Peverel, is not quite in time or stature the great Henry Irving, he is, as she admits in her foreword, precious like him. Catherine Carter, a young girl of talent, pushed by her up-and-down ambition, and by her formidable mother ('the Little General') joins Henry's company at his famous Belvedere theatre. It is obvious that the author is interested in her period background, and also in the timeless nose-cutting-off face-spiting antics of professional jealousy. Henry, for instance, will engage mediocrities because of his hidden fear of rivalry, come by hard times in early struggles. With this same hidden eye he sees that Catherine has a future ahead of her and so plays her down, also he is in love with her, which irritates him. Catherine marries a titled bad actor but the marriage breaks up. 'Don't you want to kick him?' is as near as we get to what is the matter with him, because, as the author says, that is the way they thought about it then. After the divorce Catherine marries Henry and the professional jealousy gets worked off in the end after an excellently communicated piece of stage fright.

Miss Hansford Johnson, again admitting it in her preface, pulls in a good many famous phrases and stories to attach them to her characters, such as 'Oh, my soul, my soul.' 'And how's your poor feet?' (which should perhaps have been left where it was) and also the story of the romantic author who turned out to be two old ladies. An interesting game. One might collect famous sayings from history and literature and write one's book round them; such as: Up, Guards, and at 'em. Roll up the map of Europe. *Peccavi*, I have Sind. Mathilda escaped disguised as a sheet. It should make a good novel. *Ich kann nicht anders*. One might try it. Publish and be damned.



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